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WOMAN AND PUPPET

MANY TRANSLATIONS

BY

G. F. MONKSHOOD

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WOMAN AND
PUPPET

ETC.

By
PIERRE LOUÏS

Translated and Adapted by
G. F. MONKSHOOD



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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

ABOUT twelve years ago Oscar Wilde dedicated his beautiful *SALOME* thus : "*À mon Ami Pierre Louÿs.*" At that time not many gentlemen in England knew the name of the writer who was to become famous throughout the Land of the Mind as author of *APHRODITE*. His earliest fame here was to be enshrined in that dedication. Afterwards, in *THE SPIRIT LAMP*, he had the honour and pleasure of putting into a French sonnet one of the prose poems that Wilde used to put into the post as letters. Suddenly, about ten years ago, every one in the republic of French letters was praising a new and wonderful book, *APHRODITE*. It was the most amazing study of antiquity since the *SALAMBO* of Flaubert or the *MARY MAGDALEN* of Edgar Saltus. The beautiful girl in the romance by Louÿs captivated a continent. She was, indeed, *mystérieuse et victorieuse*. But he did not stop. His waiting world soon had from him the *CHANSONS DE BILITIS*. An English wit, one of the few, said they were *CHANCES OF DEBILITY*. His phrase saves trouble, but one can say that these prose chansons were a picture of Sapphic life and love of a very febrile sort. There is quite a lot of that in modern French literature. It is a mode of the moment.

Louÿs then passed to the writing of the superb little books LEDA, BYBLIS, THE ARTIST TRIUMPHANT, and A NEW PLEASURE. They are here translated. The narrative Louÿs called THE ADVENTURES OF KING PAUSOLUS was of the whimsy story type. It brought to the minds of well-read men such things as Uchard's tale MON ONCLE BARBASSOU. It also clearly informed the reader that Louÿs was French, and that even in the telling of a harmless romance the strip of water between England and France is a strip that also flows between two antipolar view-points. But Louÿs at last came to the writing of WOMAN AND PUPPET, and wrote something of deepest human intent. A version of it follows. The very curious story entitled THE HILL OF HORSEL shows the fusing of fact and fiction, antiquity and to-day. It is a most interesting effort, and achievement, in a form of story that Poe, Gautier and D'Aurevilly also perfected.

G. F. MONKSHOOD.

WOMAN AND PUPPET

CHAPTER I

IN Spain the Carnival does not finish, as in France, at eight o'clock on the morning of Ash Wednesday. Over the wonderful gaiety of Seville the memory that "*dust we are*," etc., spreads its odour of sepulture for four days only, and the first Sunday of Lent all the Carnival reawakens.

It is the *Domingo de Pinatas*, or the Sunday of Marmites, the Grand Fête. All the populous town has changed its costume, and one sees in the streets rags and tatters of red, blue, green, yellow or rose, that have been mosquito-nets,

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curtains or women's garments, all waving in the sunlight and carried by a small body of ragamuffins. The youngsters, noisy, many-coloured and masked, push their way through the crowd of great personages. •

At the windows one sees pressed forward innumerable brunette heads. Nearly all the young girls of the countryside are in Seville on such a day as this. Paper confetti fall as a coloured rain, fans shade and protect pretty powdered faces, there are cries, appeals and laughter in the narrow streets. A few thousands of people make more noise on this day of Carnival than would the whole of Paris.

But, on the twenty-third of February in eighteen hundred and ninety-six, André Stévenol saw the end of the Carnival approaching with a slight feeling of vexation, for the week, although essentially one of love-affairs, had not brought •him any new adventure. Some previous so-

journing in Spain had taught him with what quickness and freedom of the heart the knots of friendship were tied and untied in this still primitive land. He was depressed at the thought that chance and circumstance had not favoured him. He had had a long paper battle with one young girl. They had fought and teased each other with the serpentine strips of Carnival time, he in the street, she at a window. She ran down and gave him a little red bouquet with "Many thanks, sir." But, alas! she had fled quickly, and at closer view illusions fled also. André put the flower in his coat, but did not put the giver in his memory.

Four o'clock sounded from many clocks. He went by way of the Calle Rodrigo and gained the Delicias, Champs-Élysées of shading trees along the immense Guadalquivir thronged with vessels. It was there that unrolled the Carnival of the elegant.

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At Seville the leisured class cannot always afford three good meals per day, but would rather go without them than without the outside show of a landau and two fine horses. Seville has hundreds of carriages, often old-fashioned but made beautiful by their horses, and occupied by people of noble race and face.

André Stévenol made a way with difficulty through the crowd edging the two sides of the vast dusty avenue. The battle of eggs was on. Eggshells filled with paper confetti were being thrown into the carriages, and thrown back, of course. André filled his pockets with eggs and fought with spirit. The stream of carriages filed past—carriages full of women, lovers, families, children, or friends. The game had lasted an hour when André felt in his pocket his last egg.

Suddenly there again appeared a young woman whose fan he had broken with an egg earlier in the combat.

She was marvellous. Deprived of the shade and shelter of the fan that had protected her delicate, laughing features ; open on all sides to the attacks of the crowd and the nearest carriages, she took bravely her part in the struggle, and, standing panting, hatless, flushed with heat and frank gaiety, she gave and received attacks. She appeared to be about twenty-two years old, and must have been at least eighteen. That she was from Andalusia could not possibly be doubted. She was of that admirable type that was born of the intermixing of Arabs and Vandals, of Semites with the Germans. Such mixing has brought together in a little valley of Europe all the perfection of two races.

Her body, long and supple, was expressive in every line and curve. One felt that even were she veiled one would be able to divine her thought, and that she laughed with her limbs, even as she

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spoke with her shoulders and her bosom, with grace and with liberty. Her hair was of dark chestnut, but at a distance shone almost black. Her cheeks were of great softness as to contour. The edges of the eyelids were very dark.

André, pressed by the crowd close to her carriage, gazed at her intently. His heart-beats told him that this woman would be one of those who were destined to play a part in his life. At once he wrote with pencil on his Carnival egg the word "QUIERO," and threw it as one might a rose into her hands.

Quiero is an astonishing verb. It is "to will," "to desire," "to love." It is "to go in quest of," it is "to cherish." In turn, and according to how used, it expresses an imperative passion, or a light caprice. It is a prayer or an order, a declaration or a condescension. Often it is but an irony. André looked as he gave it the look that can mean "I would

love to love you." She put the curious missive in a sort of hand-bag, and the stream of traffic took her on. André lost sight of her after a vain attempt to follow.

Saddened he slowly returned. For him all the Carnival was shrouded and ended. Should he have been more determined and found a way in the crowd? How could he find her again? It was not certain that she lived in Seville. If not, it might be impossible to find her. And little by little, by an unhappy illusion, the image that his mind held of her became more charming. Certain details of her sweet features that had only won a moment's curious notice now became transmuted in the crucible of memory into the principal things that made up her tender attitude. There was a certain detail in the dressing of the hair, an extreme mobility in the corners of the lips. The latter changed each instant in form and expression. Often almost hidden,

often almost curved upwards, rounded, slender, pale or darkened, animated, so to speak, with a varying flame of life and soul. Ah! perhaps one could blame all the rest of that face—say that the nose was not Grecian, the chin not Roman; but not to colour with pleasure at the sight of those little lip-corners was to be past all forgiveness in this world.

So his thoughts flew on and on till a voice cried behind him rough but warning: a carriage was passing quickly in the narrow street. In the carriage was a young woman who, when she saw André threw gently towards him, as one would throw a rose, an egg inscribed "Quiero."

But, now, after the word there was a decided flourish. It was as if the fair one had wished to reply by stressing his own one-word message.

CHAPTER II

HER carriage had turned the corner of the street. André went in pursuit, anxious not to lose a second chance that might be the last. He arrived as the horses went through the gates of a house in the Plaza del Triunfo. The great black gates closed upon the rapidly caught silhouette of a woman.

Without doubt it would have been wiser if he had prepared to learn the name and family, or mode of life of the stranger, before bursting into all the divine unknown of any such intrigue, in which, knowing nothing, he could not be master of anything. André nevertheless resolved not to quit the place without a first effort to find out something. He deliberately rang the gate bell.

A young custodian came, but did not open the gates.

"What does Your Grace demand?"

"Take my card to the Señora."

"To what Señora?"

"To the one who lives here, I presume."

"But her name?"

"I say that your mistress awaits me."

The man bowed and made a deprecatory sign with his hands, then retired without opening the gates or taking the card.

Then André rang a second and third time. Anger had made him discourteous.

"A woman so prompt to reply to a declaration of this type," he thought, "cannot be surprised that one insists upon trying to see her." It did not occur to him that the Carnival and the bacchanal forgives passing follies, that are not usually permitted in normal social life.

What was to be done? He paced to and fro, but there was no sight of her and no sign. Near the house was a stall-keeper

whom André bribed and questioned. But the man replied—

“The Señora purchases of me, but if she knew I talked of her to any one she would buy of my rivals. I can only tell you her name: she is the Señora Dona Concepcion Perez, wife of Don Manuel Garcia. Her husband is in Bolivia.”

André heard no more, but returned to his hotel and remained there undecided. Even upon learning of the absence of the Señora's husband, he had not also learnt that all the chances were upon his side. The reserve of the dealer, who seemed to know more than he would care to say, rather left one with the idea that there was another and luckier lover already chosen and enthroned. The attitude of the servant at the gates increased this awkward after-thought.

André had to return to Paris in two weeks' time. Would those weeks suffice for planning and effecting an entry into

the life of a beautiful young dame, whose life was without much doubt planned, rounded, complete?

While thus troubled with his incertitudes a letter was handed to him. It had no address on the envelope. He said, "Are you sure that this letter is for me?"

"It has just been given to me for Don Andrés Stévenol."

The letter was written upon a blue card, and was as follows—

"Don Andrés Stévenol is begged to not make so much noise, to not give his name or demand to know mine. If he is out walking to-morrow about three on the Empalme route a carriage will be passing. It may stop."

André thought how easy life was, and already had visions of approaching intimacy. He even sought for and murmured the most tender little forms of her charming christian name Concepcion, Concha, Conchita, Chita.

CHAPTER III

ON the morning of the morrow André Stévenal had a radiant awakening. The light flooded his room, which had four windows. There also came to him the murmurs of the town. There were the feet of horses passing, street cries, mules' bells, and the bells of convents.

He could not recall having known a morning as happy as this present one was ; no, not for a long time. He flung out his arms and stretched them ; then held them tightly folded around his breast as though to give himself the illusion or the anticipation of that eagerly awaited embrace.

"How easy, how simple the affairs of life are, after all !" So he mused, smiling. "Yesterday, at this hour I was alone, without an object to fill my mind, almost

without a thought. It was merely necessary to take a walk and, behold ! a change of scene, a love-affair in view. What is the use of taking any notice of refusals, of disdain, or any such things. We desire and demand, and the women give themselves. Why should it ever be otherwise ? ”

He rose, and in dressing-gown and slippers rang for his bath to be prepared. Whilst waiting with his forehead pressed to the window-panes he stared into the thoroughfare before him, now full of the stir of day. The houses in sight were painted in light colours that Seville favours as a rule : colours like the gay tints of women's dresses—cream, rose, green, orange, violet, but not the fearful brown of Cadiz or Madrid, or the crude white of Jérez. There were orange-trees in sight, bearing fruit ; running fountains and laughing girls, holding their shawls close. From all sides come the sound of

the mules' bells. André could not then imagine any other place in which to live but—Seville.

He finished dressing, and slowly sipped a little cup of the thick Spanish chocolate, then, easy in mind, almost aimlessly he went out into the busy street.

By chance he went the shortest way, to the Plaza del Triunfo. Then he remembered that he was not to haunt the residence of his "mistress," as he called her to himself, so he went to Las Delicias. The place was strewn with paper and the usual signs of the Carnival. It was also deserted, for Lent had recommenced. Nevertheless, by a way that led from the city's outskirts, André saw coming towards him one whom he recognized.

"Good-day, Don Mateo," he said, holding out his hand. "I had not thought of seeing you so soon."

"Well, here I am, alone, idle and at a loose end. I stroll about in the morning

and evening, and fill up most of the day reading or playing in some way. It's a dull sort of existence."

"But you have nights that console the monotony of the days, if one may credit the chatter of the city busybody?"

"Whoever says so says wrongly. From now to the day of his death Don Mateo Diaz has no woman about him. But do not let us talk about me. For how long are you still going to remain here?"

Don Mateo was a Spaniard, forty years old, to whom André had been introduced during his first stay in Spain. He was a man of florid phrase and declamatory gesture, very rich, and famed for his love affairs. So André was surprised to hear that he had renounced the pomps and vanities of the flesh, but did not attempt to weary him with questions.

They walked by the river for a time, and all their talk was of Spain, its people, its policy, and history.

Then, "You will come and break your fast or lunch," said Don Mateo. "My place is there, near the route D'Empalme. We shall be there in a half-hour, and, if you will permit me, I will keep you till the evening. I have some fine horses I should like to show off before you."

"I agree to take lunch with you," said André, "but I cannot stay. This evening I have a rendezvous that I must not fail to keep; that is a fact."

"A lady . . . I ask no questions. But stay as long as you can. When I was your age I did not want to be bothered with the outer world during my 'days of mystery.' The only person I loved to speak to on such days was the woman of the moment."

Don Mateo was silent for a while, then said in a tone of advice—

"Ah, guard yourself against the women! I should be the last man to say fly from them, for I have spent my life

upon them until now. And if I had my life to live again, the hours passed with women are those I would most desire to revive. But guard yourself; guard yourself!"

Then, as though he had found a phrase that fitted exactly to his thoughts, Don Mateo added more slowly—

"There are two kinds of women that one should avoid, at all cost: those who do not love you, and those who do. Between these two extremes there are thousands of women of great charm, but we do not know how to appreciate them."

The lunch would have been very slow indeed if the animation of Don Mateo had not replaced by a monologue the interchange of thought for thought that should have taken place. André was mentally preoccupied, and only appeared to hear the half of what his host said to him. As the hour of his assignation drew nearer, the throbbing of his heart, as on the Carnival

day, came back to him, but intensified. It was a kind of persistent appeal within him, and all thoughts save the thought of the longed-for woman were driven out of him. He would have given much for the hands of the dial near him to have pointed to the next hour, but the face of the clock was cold to his emotion, and time would no more flow than the water of a stagnant pond.

At last, almost incapable of holding his tongue any longer, he surprised his host by saying—

“Don Mateo, you have always given me the best advice. May I confide a secret to you and appeal to your advice again?”

“I am entirely yours,” replied the Spaniard, rising and making for the smoking-room.

“I would not ask any one but you,” said André hesitatingly. “Do you know a lady of Seville named Donna Concepcion Garcia?”

Mateo leaped up, then rapidly uttered—
“Concepcion Garcia! Concepcion Garcia! But which one? Explain. There are twenty thousand Concepcion Garcias, in Spain to-day. It is a name as common as Jeanne Duval or Marie Lambert in France. For Heaven’s sake tell me what is her other name. Is it Perez, Concha Perez?”

“Yes,” said André, completely astonished.

Then Don Mateo continued in precise tones—

“Concepcion Perez de Garcia: twenty-two, Plaza del Triunfo, eighteen years old, hair almost black, and a mouth, Heavens what a divine mouth!”

“Yes,” again answered André.

“Ah! You have done well to mention her name. If I can stop you at the gate in this affair, it will be a good action on my part, and a piece of good luck for you!”

“Is she a girl who would go to the arms of any one?”

"No. She has had but few lovers. For these times, she is chaste and very intelligent, with wit and a knowledge of life. She dances with eloquence, speaks as well as she dances, and sings equally well. Have I said enough?"

André could hardly get a word out before Don Mateo resumed—

"And she is the worst of women. I hope that God will never pardon her!"

André rose as if to go.

"Nevertheless, Don Mateo, I—who am not yet able to speak of this woman as you are—I, at present, am still less able to fail to keep an assignation she has made with me. I have made you a confession, and I regret to break yours by a premature departure." He held out his hand.

Mateo placed himself before the door.

"Hear me, I beg of you. I speak to you, man to man, and I say Stop! return as you came. Forget who you have seen,

who has spoken to you and written to you. If you would know peace, calm nights and a life lacking in black care, *do not approach Concha Perez!* Do not approach this woman. Let me save you. Have mercy upon yourself, in fact."

"Don Mateo. Do you then love her? . . ."

The Spaniard stroked his forehead, and answered—

"Oh no! I do not now love or hate. It is all over and done with, all trace effaced."

Mateo gazed at André, then, quite changing to a tone of banter, said—

"Besides, one should never go to the first rendezvous a woman gives one."

"Why not?"

"Because she never comes there."

A memory of an affair made André smile, and admit it was often true. 'c

"Very often. And if by chance she

comes, be sure *your* absence will deepen her liking for you."

A short silence came. They had re-seated themselves, and Mateo said—

"Now listen, please."

CHAPTER IV

THREE years ago I had not the grey hairs that you now see, and was thirty-seven years of age, though I felt but twenty-two. I do not know precisely when my youth passed from me, and it is hard for me to realize that it has reached its end. People have told you that I was one of the gadabouts of passion. That is false. I respected Love and I never degraded her. Scarcely ever have I caressed a woman whom I did not passionately love. If I were to name or number these loves to you you would be surprised for they were but a few. I easily remember that I have never loved a blonde. I have always ignored those pale objects of worship. What is furthermore true, is that, for me, love has not been a mere

pleasure or pastime. It has been my very life. If I were to take out of my life all the thoughts and actions that had the woman for their sole end, there would remain nothing but emptiness—space. This much said, I may now recount to you what I know of Concha Perez.

I go first to three years and a half ago, and winter-time. I returned from France, a bitter cold journey too, one twenty-sixth of December, in the express that passes the bridge of the Bidassoa.

The snow, already very thick at Biarritz and Saint Sebastian, rendered almost impracticable the traversing of the Guipuzcoa. The train stopped two hours at Zumarraga, for snow to be cleared away. Later an avalanche stopped us for three hours. All night this snow trouble went on. Sounds were deadened by the fall, and so we were travelling in a silence to which danger gave a touch of grandeur.

The morning of the morrow found us

at Avila. We were eight hours late, and had fasted for a day. We learnt at last that we should be "hung up" at that place four days! Do you know Avila by any chance? It is the place that they should send those people to who rave about Old Spain being dead and done with. The inn I stopped at, Don Quixote could easily have used also.

In resuming my journey I went third-class, for a change, in a compartment nearly full of Spanish women. There were really four compartments with partitions about shoulder high.

Well, we were passing the Sierra of Guadarrama, and suddenly the train stopped again. We were blocked by another avalanche. When we realized this there was a general request made to a gitana present to dance.

She did dance: a woman about thirty, of the ugly gipsy type, but she seemed to have fire in the fingers that flashed the

castanets and fire in her limbs. Every one knelt and listened, or beat time with their hands. I now noticed in the corner facing me a young girl, who was singing.

She wore a rose-coloured skirt, that made me guess she was from Andalucia—that colour-loving province.

Her shoulders and bosom were swathed in a creamy shawl, and she had a throat scarf of white foulard to protect her from the cold. The whole carriage already knew that she was trained at the Convent of San José d'Avila, was going to Madrid to find her mother, and bore the name of Concha Perez.

Her voice was singularly penetrating. She sang without moving her body about, hands in shawl, eyes closed.

The songs she was singing were not taught her by the Sisters, I can be quite sure. They were the little songs of four lines, only loved by the people. Into these quatrains they put much passion.

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I can hear again in memory the caress in her voice as she sang—

“Thy bed is of jasmins,
Thy sheets of white roses ;
Of lilies thy pillows,
And a dark rose there poses.”

There followed an angry scene between her and the gipsy. They fought, but I stepped between, for I loathe to see women fighting. They do it badly and dangerously. When it was all over, a gendarme came, and after slapping Concha upon the cheeks put her in another compartment. The train now went forward again, and my companions began to sleep. The image of the little singer tormented me. Where had he put her? I leant over the barrier of my carriage, and saw that she was there, close enough to touch. She was sleeping like a tired child. I saw the closed lids, the long lashes, the little nose and two small lips, that seemed to be at one and the same time infantile and

sensual. Gazing for a long time at those amazing lips, I wondered whether their dream movements were recalling the breast that nursed her, or the lips of a lover.

Daylight came, and with it the end of the journey. I aided the little Concha to get together six parcels, and offered to carry them but was refused. She managed with them somehow, and ran off. I soon lost sight of her.

You see, do you not, this first meeting was insignificant, almost vague. She had interested and amused me for a little while. That was really all. Soon I ceased to think of her at all.

CHAPTER V

THE following summer I found her again. In August, I was alone in my house, a house that a feminine presence had filled for years. One afternoon, bored to death, I visited the Government Tobacco Manufactory of Seville. It was a sweltering day. I entered alone, which was a favour, in this immense harem of about five thousand women-workers, of a rather free-and-easy type.

I have said the day was terribly hot? Most of the workers were half-dressed only. It was a mixed spectacle, certainly : a sort of panorama of women at all ages. I passed along, sometimes being asked for a gift, sometimes being given a cynical pleasantry. Suddenly I recognized Concha,

and asked her what brought her into that place.

"Heaven knows, I have forgotten."

"But your convent training?"

"When girls go there through the door, they leave through the window."

"Did you?"

"I will be honest with you. I didn't enter at all for fear of sinning. Give me a coin, and I will sing you something while the superintendent is away from here."

Then she told me she lived with her mother, and came to the factory when in the mood. I gave her a napoléon, and then left.

In the youth of happy men there is a moment, an instant, that chance decides. My moment came when I dropped that golden coin before that girl. It was as if I had thrown a fatal die. I date from then and there my actual life, "the life I have lived the most." My moral ruin was then begun.

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You shall know all ; the actual story is simple enough, truly.

I left the State Factory, and walked slowly into the shadowless street. There she rejoined me, and said—

“ I thank you, sir.”

I noted that her voice had changed. The golden gift had evoked in her the emotion that comes with the desire for wealth. She asked me to conduct her home to the Calle Manteros, quite near.

She told me she had no sweetheart, and I then replied—

“ Surely, not through piety ? ”

“ I am pious, but I haven't taken any vows.”

Finally she said that she was virginal, and had kept herself pure.

CHAPTER VI

SHE admitted this with such a directness, such an air, that I quite flushed and felt ill at ease. Whatever was passing in that childish-looking head, behind that face so provoking, so rebellious? What signified her decided moral attitude, her frank and, possibly, honest eye, her sensuous mouth that seemed to tempt and yet defy. All that I really knew was that she pleased me vastly, that I was enchanted to have found her again, and looked forward to finding other chances of being with her. We reached her home. Down-stairs at the doorway I bought her some mandarines. At the top floor she gave three little knocks at a door and I stood before her mother,

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a dark woman, who had once been beautiful.

Then began confidences ; they seemed endless. The mother said she was the widow of an engineer, and told me a story I had heard elsewhere twenty times.

“Ah, Caballero, we should have been rich, we two, had we but followed evil ways. But sin has never passed the evening here!”

Conchita during this discourse was putting powder on her cheeks. She turned to me with a smile transfiguring her mouth.

Finally I laid down four banknotes and arranged that Conchita was not to return to the factory. I called again the next day. She was alone. That day she came and sat upon my knees and kissed me with her burning mouth. I left but to return, alas! not once, but twenty times more. I was in love like the youngest, the most foolish of men.* You must have known such madness yourself

and will understand me. Each time I left her rooms I counted the hours until the next meeting, and those hours never seemed to go. Little by little I got to pass the whole day with them, paying all the expenses and the debts too. This cost me a good deal of money. How Conchita and I talked!

But she was impenetrable, mysterious. She seemed to love me; possibly I really loved her. To-day I do not know what to think. To all my pleadings she answered merely, "Later." That resolution I could not break. I swore to leave her and she told me to go. I threatened her, even with my violence: it left her unconcerned. When loaded with presents she accepted them upon her own terms. Nevertheless, when I entered her place, I saw a light in her eyes that was not, I believe, a feigned one.

She slept nine hours at night and had a siesta of three hours. She did nothing

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else. The work of the place was her mother's affair. During one whole week she refused to get up at all. Her conception of the duties of the day was very Spanish. But I do not know from what country came her conception of love. After twelve weeks of wooing I saw in her maddening smile the same promises and certainly the same resistance.

At last, one day, I took her mother into my confidence, and confessing my love invoked her aid. After a night and a morning that were insupportable through suspense, I received a four-line letter—

"If you had loved me you would have waited. I wished to give myself to you. You have asked that I shall be sold to you. Never again shall you see me.

"CONCHITA."

When I reached their rooms in Seville they had left with all their belongings.

CHAPTER VII

AUTUMN and winter passed. Memory was pitiless to me, and I felt shattered. The months were empty. Oh, how I loved her, God of Heaven! I thought sometimes that she was trying me, testing me, to be sure of me. So be it. We met again. I was returning from the theatre, and in the Calle Trajano I heard her voice call my name. She was at a window about shoulder high from the ground, in night attire and shawled.

I gazed at her as one entranced. She held her hand to me, and I covered hand and arm with kisses. I was half insane with love. I craved for her lips only to get for answer, "Later."

I pressed her with questions. They had been to Madrid then to Carabanchel,

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By economy with my money they had now rented her present place. There was enough money left to live honestly for a month.

“And after that do you seriously think I shall feel embarrassed?”

Then she paused.

“You do not understand me. I can still work at the factory, sell bananas, make bouquets, dance the Sevillana, can I not, Don Mateo?”

Then with a sigh she leant forward, and said—

“Mateo, I will be your mistress the day after to-morrow.”

“Are you sincere?”

“I have said it. Leave me, Mateo. Be not impatient or jealous.” Then she left me.

CHAPTER VIII

Two interminable days and nights followed. I was happy and yet suffering. A kind of troubled joy seemed to dominate every other feeling. The hour of the assignation came, and I heard her softly call, "Mateo." We kissed passionately and a long love scene followed. Questions, protestations, appeals. To hasten over what was to me a time of great stress and strain, mental and physical, let me at once say that Concha would in reality consent to nothing but this. I might live with her, worship her, love her as fervently, truly, tenderly as I liked, *but* she was to be left wholly pure, utterly virginal. I endured this state of things for two weeks. Concha then borrowed from me a large sum to pay more debts, and the next day I found that mother and daughter had fled again!

CHAPTER IX

It was too much to bear. I left for Madrid, and tried to get fond of an Italian dancer. I returned to Seville, then went to Granada, Cordova, Jérez. I sought for Concha Perez. At Cadiz we met again. One evening I entered a drinking saloon. She was there dancing before sailors and fishermen. At the moment I saw her I trembled and throbbed. I must have become pale, and I felt as though I had no breath, no force, no will. I dropped down upon the seat nearest the door, and head in hands watched her. Her dance finished she came towards me. All knew her. From all sides came cries of "Conchita" that made me shudder. On all sides she cast glances. Here a smile, there a laugh, a shrug, a flower accepted, a drink sipped.

She sat at my table facing me, and desired coffee.

I said in a low voice that I tried to steady—

“Then you fear nothing, Concha, not even death.”

“You would not kill me.”

“Do you dare me to.”

“Yes, here or where you will. I know you, Don Mateo, as though you were borne in my bosom nine months.”

Bitter reproaches followed, and I taunted her. She rose, furious, and, vowing by her father's tomb that she was virtuous, left me.

CHAPTER X

AFTER all that had happened I had three paths open before me—

To leave her for ever ;

To force her to stay with me ;

To take her life.

I took a fourth path. I submitted to her own way of treating me. Each evening I returned to my cozenage, looking at her, and waiting, waiting.

Little by little, I think, she was more softened towards me. It even seemed sometimes that she had not really intended me the harm that had in fact been done. But the tavern life she now made me lead did not suit me. It never has or can. The Señora Perez was there too.

She seemed to know nothing of what had happened. Did she ~~lie~~? I heard

her Memoirs once more, and paid for her glasses of Eau-de-vie.

My sole instants of joy were provided by the dances of Concha. Her triumph was the dance named *The Flamenco*. What a tragic dance! It is, so to speak, all passion expressed in three acts. I always see her in that dance. She was resplendent. During a month she tolerated me in what may be called the dressing-room, at the rear of the stage where the dances took place. I had not even the right to see her home; I kept my "place" near her on conditions—no reproaches as to the past or the present. As to the future I did not know anything, and had no idea whatever what would be the solution of my most pitiable adventure of body and spirit.

Then came a night when, with other dancers, she danced, with bosom bared, in a room up-stairs. There were two rich Englishmen present.

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I went up to her, and said—

“ Follow me. Do not be afraid. But
come or beware ! ”

But again, she dared and defied me.

CHAPTER XI

THEY left us alone.

"Defend yourself. Lie. You lie so well!" I cried.

"Ah," she answered. "You accuse me. Superb! After entering here like a thief, spoiling my dance and scaring every one away."

The usual scene of reproach, recrimination and explanation followed. At the end I drew her on to my knees.

"Listen," I said. "I cannot live thus. If you stay here a day longer I will indeed leave you for ever, Conchita."

Then she protested that she loved me, and had always loved me.

Again she tamed me with her words, and the scene ended as so many had ended—in her triumph. We returned to

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Seville, where I took a house for her. In that house she pretended that she had a lover. It was pretence, but at last I turned and struck her in the face !

She tried to stab me but failed. Then I beat her until I hurt my own hand. On her knees she craved my pardon, and opened her arms to me. I took her. She was virginal as on the day of her birth.

CHAPTER XII AND LAST

ANDRÉ returned to Seville. He there met Concha Perez.

As they were starting for Paris a letter came by hand addressed to her. A little later in life André knew that the letter was as follows—

“My Conchita, I pardon you. I cannot live where you are not. Return to me. Now it is I who kneel to you. I kiss your feet.

“MATEO.”

THE NEW PLEASURE

CHAPTER I

FOR four or five years I lived in a flat that was in a street near the little Park Monceau. I was there only for certain days in the week. The flat was not the finest in Paris, but was discreet, and the place generally had a well-valeted look. A distinct drawback was that although one end of my street gave on to the park, I could not enjoy that latter place much, for the gates were closed every evening before midnight—just when I most deeply appreciate walking for exercise and to take the pure air.

One night at the flat I sat in silent contemplation of two blue china cats that crouched upon a white table. I was wondering whether it would be better to pass the time smoking cigarettes or writ-

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ing sonnets. Another idea was that it might be better to smoke the cigarettes and stare at the painting on the ceiling. Cigarette, sonnet, or stare? The most important thing at such an hour is to have a cigarette ready to hand and lip. It enshrouds all the most material things with scarves of cloud, fine and celestial. It adds something both to the lights and to the dark of the chamber, taking away the hard mathematics of the angles, and by means of a scented magical spell brings to the agitated human spirit a panacea and peace. It brings, too, the land of dreams. On the particular evening I now speak of there was the intention of doing some writing, and yet the desire to do nothing was active and coercive. Put differently, it was an evening that resembled many other similar evenings of the "unlit lamp and ungirt loin." Evenings that ended with a full ink-well, sheets of dead-white writing paper, and—a large ash-tray full of

golden ends of cigarettes, ashes and unused ideas.

Suddenly I was brought back from my "open-eye dreams" by the unexpected ringing of the bell. I raised my head and tried to be positive that on Friday night, the ninth of June, I did not await any one at that hour of the night. A second ring soon came, so I went to the door and drew back the bolt.

When the door was opened I saw a woman waiting. She was wrapped in a sort of mantle, like a travelling cloak, fastened around the throat. Above, the head was poised. I saw that her hair was blond, and that she was young. Beneath the shadow of her tresses gleamed very dark eyes. The face was a trifle teasing in its expression, and rather sensual, the mouth being very red.

"Do you wish me to come in?" she said, inclining her sweet head upon her shoulder.

I drew back, flattened as it were against

the wall, suffering from the genuine, the natural astonishment of a man who has to open his door at such an hour to a woman of whom he has not the slightest recollection—a woman, too, who used the intimate form of address, “thou,” in the first phrase she used.

“My dear lady,” I said, with a touch of timidity, as I followed her into my chamber, “spare me any blame. Of course I recognize you clearly, but by some lapse of memory I do not recall your name. Is it not Lucienne or Tototte?”

She smiled a tender, indulgent smile, but, making no reply, unfastened her mantle.

Her robe was of sea-green silk, with an iris pattern. Snared in the low-cut corsage were beautiful breasts, that seemed as though they longed to burst forth—a flow of imprisoned beauty. Clashed around each of the nude, dark arms was a golden snake, with glittering emerald eyes.

Around the throat of darkest cream were two rows of pearls—pearls that had meant the loss of many lives.

“If you remember me it is because we have met in the land of dreams, or in some land of the mind, where it seems that dreams come true. I am Callisto, daughter of Lamia. During eighteen hundred years my tomb has had peace. It is in the flowerful fields and woods of Daphne, near to the hills where were the voluptuous dwelling-places of Antioch. But in these days even the tombs have no abiding home. They took me to Paris, and my shadow or spirit followed. For a long time I slept in the icy caves of the Louvre. I should have been there for ever and ever if it had not been for a great and grand pagan, a really holy man, Louis Ménard. He is the only living man in all this land who knows to-day the signs and symbols of the ancient divinities. Before my tomb he solemnly pronounced the words that of

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old gave a nightly and transitory life to the unhappy dead! Therefore behold me. For seven hours each night I may go through your miserable city. . . .”

“Oh, child of the older world,” I cried, “how you must see the change the world sorrows under!”

“Yes, and yet no. I find the dwellings dark, the dresses ugly, the sky sorrowful. How oddly you dress for such a climate. I find that life in general is more stupid, and that human beings look much less happy than in the older and more golden days. But if there is one thing that greatly stupefies me, it is to see that you have still so many of the things that I knew of old. What . . . in eighteen hundred years have you all made nothing more, nothing new? Is that so really and truly? What I have seen in the houses, the open air, the streets, is that all? Have you not succeeded in finding a new thing? If not, what misery, my friend!” •

My attitude of astonishment was my sole reply.

She smiled, the lovely red lips parting over her mother-of-pearl teeth most enchantingly. Then she murmured in explanation—

“See how I am dressed. This was my burial attire. Regard it. In my first lifetime one dressed in wool and silk. In returning to the earth I thought that such things would have passed away even from the memory of man. I imagined that after so many years that the human race would have discovered fabrics to dress in more wonderful than a tissue of sun and silk, more pleasurable to touch than the exquisite tender skin of young virgins, of rose-leaves, of downy peaches. But you still dress or clothe yourselves in thread, in wool, in the silk we all had of old. Then look at my shoes of olive morocco, worked with gold like the binding of a rare book. Have you as lovely things for the feet in

these days? And so with the gems and jewels of these days. I knew them all, then."

"Callisto," at last I said, "you give these things too great an importance. A girl is never so beautiful as when she is made as the gods made her."

She gazed at me, then said very slowly, "Are you sure now that women themselves, their form, has not changed since my early days of life?"

CHAPTER II

To my utter amazement she followed her last words by slipping off her jewels and robes. She had the grandeur of a goddess from throat to feet. She curved into a long, deep, easy chair, and said, "Why have you people of to-day not perfected the woman as you have perfected flowers?" She continued in a soft, dreamy voice, "Oh, days of the youth of the world, days of the first coming of pleasure! . . . During the nineteen hundred years of my sleep in the grave what new joy have you all discovered. What new pleasure have you found? Invite me to share it with you. . . ."

"We need more time, Callisto," I pleaded.

She smiled in derision. "Your art

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and thought have both borrowed from us —parasites of our dead bodies. Descartes and Kant borrowed from our Parmenides. Euclid,* Archimedes, Aristotle, Democritus, Heraclitus . . . you have discovered nothing that they had not dreamt. You have discovered nothing, not even America. Aristotle said the earth was round, and indicated the path that Columbus finally took. But, oh! if only you had discovered *one* new pleasure; only one.”

I sighed. I could not combat her arguments any more than I could resist her beauty. Instead, I simply said, “Will you take a cigarette? Doubtless Aristotle taught you that——”

“No,” Callisto answered; “but do you offer me that as a new pleasure?”

She consented to take one, and I taught her the best method of getting joy from those tubes of white and gold. There followed a long silence. She held in her

hand my packet of cigarettes, and seemed to be deep in the enjoyment of an emotion she would not share. Another cigarette was lit for her, and slowly smoked. Calisto, at last, had found a new pleasure!

BYBLIS

*Amaryllis told to the three young women
and the three philosophers, as if they
were little children, this fable.*

“TRAVELLERS I have known, who have gone to Caril by ascending the Méandre far beyond the range of the shepherds, have seen the River God asleep in the shade on the river-bank. He had a long green beard, and his face was wrinkled like the river’s grey and rocky banks from which trailed dripping plants. His old eyelids seemed dead as they overhung the eyes which were for ever blind. It is likely that if any one went to find him now, he would not be discovered alive.

“Now this was the father of Byblis by his marriage with the nymph Cyanée; I will tell you the story of the unhappy Byblis.”

CHAPTER I

IN the grotto from which the river emerged in a mysterious way the nymph Cyanée gave birth to twins; one was a son who was named Caunos, and the other a girl to whom the name of Byblis was given.

They both grew up upon the banks of the Méandre, and sometimes Cyanée showed them beneath its transparent surface the divine appearance of their father, whose soul disturbed its flowing stream.

The only world the children knew was the forest in which they were born. They had never seen the sun except through the network of its branches. Byblis never left her brother, and walked with her arm around his neck.

She wore a little tunic which her mother

had woven for her in the depths of the river, which tunic was blue-grey like the first light of dawn. Caunos wore around his waist nothing but a garland of roses from which hung a yellow waist-cloth.

As soon as it was light enough for them to walk in the woods, they wandered far away, playing with the fruits which had fallen to the ground, or searching for the largest and most sweetly-scented flowers. They always shared their finds and never quarrelled, so that their mother spoke proudly of them to the other nymphs her friends.

Now when twelve years from the day of their birth had sped, their mother became uneasy and sometimes followed them.

The two children played no longer, and when they returned from a day in the forest, they brought back nothing with

them, neither birds, flowers, fruits, nor garlands. They walked so close together that their hair was mingled. Byblis' hands strayed about her brother's arms. Sometimes she kissed him upon the cheek: then they both remained silent.

When the heat was too great they glided beneath the low branches, and lying on their breasts upon the sweet-smelling grass talked and adored each other without ever withdrawing from each other's embrace.

Then Cyanée took her son aside and said to him—

“Why are you sad?”

Caunos replied—

“I am not sad. I used to be when I was playing and laughing. Now everything is changed. I no longer feel the need of play, and if I do not laugh it is because I am happy.”

Then Cyanée asked him, “Why are you happy?”

The answer which Caunos gave her was—

“Because I look at Byblis.”

Cyanée asked him too—

“Why is it that you do not now look at the forest?”

“Because Byblis’ hair is softer and more scented than the grass; because Byblis’ eyes——”

But Cyanée stopped him. “Child! be silent!”

Hoping to cure him of his illicit passion, she at once took him to a mountain-nymph who had seven daughters most wondrously and indescribably beautiful.

Both of them, after planning together, said to him—

“Make your choice, Caunos, and the one who pleases you shall be your wife.”

But Caunos looked at the seven young girls as unmovedly as if he had been looking at seven rocks; for the image of Byblis quite filled his little soul, and

there was not room in him for an alien love.

For a month Cyanée took her son from mountain to mountain, and from plain to plain without succeeding in diverting him from his desire.

At last realizing that she would never overcome his obstinate passion, she began to hate her son and accuse him of infamous conduct. But the child did not understand why his mother reproached him. Why among all women was he to be refused the one he loved? Why was it that caresses, which would have been permissible in the importunate arms of another, became criminal in the arms of his beloved Byblis? For what mysterious reason was it that a sentiment which he knew to be good, tender and capable of any sacrifice, was deemed worthy of every punishment? Zeus, he thought, married his sister, and Aphrodite dared to deceive her brother Ares with her brother Hephaïstos. For he

did not yet know that the gods alone have given themselves an intelligent morality and that they disturb men's virtue by incomprehensible laws.

Now Cyanée said to her son—

· “ I disown you as my child ! ”

She made a sign to a Centaur which was going towards the sea, and had Caunos placed upon its back. Then the beast went rapidly away.

For some time Cyanée followed her son with her eyes. Caunos in his fright clung to the shoulders of the beast, and was sometimes buried in its monstrous mane. Then Centaur moved with long and powerful strides; it travelled in a straight line, and soon grew small in the distance. Then it turned behind a clump of bushes and reappeared looking from afar like a tiny and almost stationary speck. At last Cyanée could see it no longer.

Slowly the mother of Byblis retraced her steps into the forest.

She was sad, but at the same time proud of saving by a forced separation the destiny of her two children; and she thanked the gods for giving her the strength to accomplish such a heartrending duty.

“Now,” she thought, “Byblis being alone will forget the brother who has been sacrificed for her. She will fall in love with the first man who knows how to caress her, and from the marriage-bed will spring, as is right, a race half human and half divine. Blest are the immortal gods!”

But when she returned to the grotto, little Byblis had disappeared.

CHAPTER II

WHEN Byblis found herself alone upon the little bed of green leaves upon which she had slept by her brother's side every night, she had in vain tried to sleep; but that evening dreams came not to her.

She went out into the warm night. A gentle breath of air swayed the darkness of the forest. She sat down and watched the flowing stream.

"Why," she thought, "has not Caunos come back. What has called him away and kept him from me. Who is it, father, that is separating us?"

As this last idea came to her she leant over the spring.

"Father!" she repeated, "father! where is Caunos? Reveal the secret to me?" •

A murmur of the water answered—

“Far away.”

Byblis in affright quickly continued—

“When will he return? When will he come back to me?”

“Never,” the spring replied.

“Dead! Is he dead?”

“No.”

“Where shall I see him again?”

The spring spake no more. Its gentle ripple resumed its monotonous sound. No divine presence seemed to live in its clear waters.

Byblis got up and fled. She knew the path by which Caunos had started with his mother. It was a narrow track which wound from tree to tree as it buried itself in the forest. She had not traversed it often, for it ran through a valley infested with serpents and dangerous beasts. This time her desire overcame her fear, and she tremblingly followed the path with all the speed of which her little bare feet were capable.

The night was not very dark; but the shadows thrown by the moon are black, and behind the mighty trees Byblis had to feel her way.

She reached a spot where the pathway split in two. Which direction was she to take, which path was she to follow? On her knees she for a long time sought for a footstep to guide her. But the earth was dry. Byblis could see nothing. As she lifted her head she perceived that, hidden in the foliage of an oak, a tree-nymph with green breasts was watching her with a smile.

“Oh!” Byblis cried, “which way did they go? Tell me if you saw them.”

The tree-nymph extended one of her long branch-like arms to the right, and Byblis thanked her with a grateful glance.

She walked on that night for a long way. The pathway seemed never-ending, and, besides, it was hardly visible beneath a covering of dead leaves; it ceaselessly

wound its way, determined in its direction by the chance of the soil, and the position of the trees; it seemed to climb up and descend into the shadows for ever.

At last worn out with fatigue Byblis fell to the ground and went to sleep.

She awakened in the morning when the sun was high in the heavens with a soft, warm sensation upon her outstretched hand. She opened her eyes to see a white hind gently licking her. But at Byblis' first movement the graceful animal jumped up, pricked its ears, and fixed its lovely dark eyes, which glittered like a mountain stream, upon a distant point.

"Hind," Byblis said, "to whom do you belong? If your mistress is the Goddess Artemis guide me, for I know her. I offer up to her in the full moonlight libations of goat's milk which are very pleasing to her, and, hind, she loves me dearly. If you are one of her company listen to the voice of my anguish, and be sure that by so

doing you will not displease the kind Huntress of the Night."

The hind appeared to understand; it started off at a pace slow enough for the child to follow. In this way they both traversed a vast expanse of forest and crossed two streams, the hind crossing them with a bound while Byblis had to wade knee-deep across them. Byblis was full of confidence. She was now sure that she was upon the right track; without a doubt the hind had been sent by the goddess herself out of gratitude for her devoutness, and the divine animal was leading her through the woods to her beloved brother from whom she would never again be separated. Every step took her nearer to the place where she would see Caunos again. She could even now feel upon her breast the fugitive's affectionate embrace. A part of his breath seemed to have entered into the atmosphere and to have charmed the breeze.

Suddenly the hind stopped. She slid her long head between two young trees, where at the same time the horns of a stag appeared, and just as if she had reached the end of her journey the hind lay down with her hoofs beneath her and her head upon the ground.

“Caunos!” Byblis called aloud, “Caunos, where are you?”

Her only answer was from the stag, as he took a few steps towards her and threatened her with his terrible horns, which were interwoven like ten brown serpents.

Then Byblis understood that the hind, like her, had come to meet her lover, and that it was perhaps useless to reckon upon the help of these entirely absorbed by an inward passion.

She turned back, but she was lost. She took another track, which rapidly descended to an invisible path. Her poor little weary feet stumbled over the stones, caught in the roots, and slipped upon the

brown carpet of pine-needles. At a turn in this uneven path, which followed the course of a stream, she stopped before a divine couple.

They were two nymphs of different orders, one of them having authority over the forests and the other the spring waters. The oread had brought to the naiad the fresh offerings received from men, and both of them were bathing in the stream, sporting and embracing as they did so.

"Naiad," Byblis said, "have you seen the son of Cyanée?"

"Yes. His shadow has passed over me. It was yesterday at sunset."

"From what direction did he come?"

"I do not know."

"Where was he going?"

"I did not follow him."

Byblis uttered a profound sigh.

"Did you," she asked the other nymph, "see the son of Cyanée?"

"Yes. Far away from here in the mountains."

"Whence did he come?"

"I did not follow him."

"Where was he going?"

"I have forgotten."

Then she continued, rising up in the midst of the flowing waters as she spake—

"Remain with us, young girl, stay. Why do you still think of him, who is absent? We have treasured up for you boundless present joys. There is no future happiness worth the trouble of pursuit."

But Byblis did not think that the nymph had spoken the truth. Although she was unable to express the ideas of her little soul, she could not conceive any greater joy than to suffer in the pursuit of happiness. During the first day of her useless journey she had counted on the assistance and zeal of the unknown creatures. When she saw that they were careless about aiding her destiny she relied solely upon

herself, and, leaving the winding path, penetrated haphazard into the labyrinth of the woods.

But the two immortals repeated their words of wisdom.

“Stay with us, young girl, stay. Why do you still think of the absent one? There is no future happiness worth the trouble of pursuit.”

Long, long afterwards the child as she crossed the mysterious mountain could hear in the distance two clear voices, calling together—

“Byblis!”

CHAPTER III

FOR a night and day Byblis traversed the mountain. She made anxious inquiries of all the deities of the woods, of the trees, of the glades and the thickets. She recounted her sorrows many times; she tremblingly implored their assistance, and wrung her little hands. But not one of them had seen Caunos.

She climbed up so high that her mother's holy name was quite unknown to all she met, and the unconcerned nymphs did not understand her.

She wanted to retrace her steps, but she was lost. On every side she was surrounded by a confused colonnade of enormous pine-trees. There were no more paths. There was no horizon. She ran in every direction. She called out in despair.

There was not even an echo to be heard.

Then as her weary eyelids drooped lower and lower she lay down upon the ground and a passing dream told her in measured tones—

“You will never see your brother, you will never set eyes upon him again.”

She awoke with a start, with her arms outstretched and her mouth open, but she was so overwhelmed with sorrow and anguish that she had not the strength to cry out.

The moon rose red like blood behind the high black outlines of the pine-trees. Byblis could hardly see it. It seemed to her that a humid veil had been dropped over her long eyes. An eternal silence had enveloped the sleeping woods.

Then a large tear gathered in the corner of her left eye.

Byblis had never before wept. She believed that she was about to die, and

sighed as if divine solace had come to her aid in a mysterious way.

The tear grew, trembled, became larger still and then suddenly trickled down her cheek.

Byblis remained motionless with fixed eyes in the light of the moon.

Then a large tear filled the corner of her right eye. It grew like the other and trickled down her right cheek.

Two other tears came, two burning drops which flowed down the moist track made by the other. They reached the corner of her mouth; a delightful bitterness overcame the worn-out child.

Then never more would her hand touch the beloved hand of Caunos. Never more would she see the gleam of his black eyes, his dear head, and wavy hair. Never again would they sleep side by side in each other's arms upon the same bed of leaves. The forests no longer knew his name.

An overwhelming outburst of despair

made Byblis hide her face in her hands, but such an abundance of tears moistened her inflamed cheeks that she seemed to feel a miraculous spring washing away her sufferings like dead leaves upon the waters of a torrent.

The tears which had been gradually born in her, rose to her eyes, welled up, overflowed, trickled in a warm flood over her cheeks, bathed her tiny breasts and fell upon her entwined legs. She did not feel them trickle one by one between her long lashes : they were a gentle and never-ending stream, an inexhaustible flood, the outpouring of an enchanted sea.

But awakened by the moonlight the deities of the forest had gathered from every side. The bark of the trees became transparent and allowed the faces of the nymphs to be seen ; and even the quivering naiads left the water and the rocks and came into the woods.

They all crowded around Byblis and

spoke to her, for they were frightened because the river of the child's tears had traced in the earth a sinuous track which was slowly extending towards the plain.

But now Byblis could hear nothing, neither voices, footsteps, nor the night wind. Her attitude little by little became eternal. Her skin had assumed beneath the deluge of tears the smooth white tint of marble washed by the waters. The wind would not have disturbed one of her hairs which were as long as her arms. She died like pure marble. A vague light still illuminated her vision. Suddenly it went out; but fresh tears still flowed from her eyes.

In that way was Byblis changed into a fountain.

LÊDA

THERE was not light enough in which to clearly see any creature or thing; it was twilight, the time of the gauzy haze that haunts our dreams.

Moonbeams were beginning to light up the blackest branches of trees: moonlight and the shine of flinching silver stars.

There were four young Corinthians reclining upon the ground near to three young men. They were deep in pleasant thought, but opened their eyes wide when the grave Melandryon said these words—

“I will tell you the story of the Swan and the little Nymph who lived upon the banks of the Eurotas. It is a story in praise of blissful shadows.” He half raised himself, and what he told his companions now follows.

CHAPTER I

IN those days there were no tombs by the roadside and no temples upon the hills. Men themselves scarce existed; there was not much talk of them. The earth was given up to the joy of the gods and the times favoured the birth of amazing divinities. It was the time of Echnida and the Chimera of Pasiphæ and the Minotaur. The young ones that there were went pale through the woods fearing to be waylaid by dragons. Nevertheless upon the humid banks of the river Eurotas, where the trees were so thick that one could not see the light, there lived an extraordinary young girl who was blue-tinted like the light of the night, mysterious as the moon and sweet as the Milky Way. That was why they had named her Lêda. She was in truth almost blue, for

the blood of the iris was in her veins and not the blood of the rose that is in your own veins. Her lips shone with blue like her eyes. Her hair was so abundant that she sometimes seemed to have long wings. She loved only the water and the night. Her chief pleasure was to walk upon the soft springy spongy turf of the banks near the water. She could feel the cold moisture of the water but hardly see the water itself, and her naked feet had little shudders of pleasure and were softly moistened.

For she did not bathe in the river because of her fear of the jealous water-nymphs, and she did not want to give herself up to the water entirely. But she loved to moisten her body and hair with the sweet river-water. Sometimes she took up into her hands the freshness of the flood and poured it between her young breasts, watching it trickle down and run away. Sometimes she laid her full length down upon the bank and drank from the

surface of the water slowly, sweetly. Then she seemed like a thirsty little animal. Such was chiefly her life : that and thinking upon the satyrs. Sometimes one came upon her unexpectedly but fled in affright, for they all thought her to be Phœbe, and austere to those who saw her naked. She would have liked to talk to them had they stayed near her. Their appearance filled her with astonishment. One night when she had gone for a short walk in the forest, because it had been raining and the ground was like a torrent, she approached one of these half-divine creatures as he slept and gazed upon him ; but she, too, in her turn became horrified and quickly retraced her steps. Since that time she occasionally thought of the incident and was disturbed about things she did not understand. She began to gaze at herself and found herself mysterious. It was the time when she became sentimental and spent much time in weeping.

When the nights were clear she gazed at her reflection in the water. Once the thought came to her that it would be better for her to plait her hair like a serpent and so display the nape of her neck which the touch of her hand told her was beautiful. She chose a jewel for her hair and made herself a garland of the leaves of water-lilies and their blossoms.

At first she took pleasure in walking like this. But as she was alone there was none to gaze at her. Then she became unhappy and ceased to be amused.

Now her spirit did not know itself but her body awaited the beating of the Swan's wings.

CHAPTER II

ONE evening, as she was hardly awake and thought of continuing her dream, because a long streak of yellow daylight still flowed behind the darkness of the forest, her attention was attracted by the sound of the reeds near her and she saw the apparition of a Swan.

The beautiful bird was as white as a woman, splendid as the light and gleaming like a cloud. It seemed to be like a mid-day sky, its form and its winged spirit. That is why it was called Dzeus.

Lêda knew it to be looking at her as it flew and walked in turn. It circled around the nymph at a distance and looked side-long at her. Even when it was almost touching her it still continued to approach, and rising on its red feet it stretched its

graceful and undulating neck as high as possible before her young thighs.

Lêda's astonished hands carefully grasped its little head and caressed it. The bird fluttered all its feathers, with its soft and feathery wings it gripped her naked legs and bent them; Lêda let herself fall upon the ground.

She covered her face with her two hands. She experienced neither fear nor shame but inexpressible joy and a beating of the heart which made her breasts tremble.

She did not realize or understand what was about to happen. She did not even understand why she was happy. She felt along her arms the supple neck of the Swan.

Why had it come? What had she done that it should come to her? Why had it not flown away like the other swans on the river or fled like the satyrs into the forest? From her earliest recollection she had

always lived alone. For that reason her ideas were very limited and the events of that night were so disconcerting. This Swan she had neither called nor seen, for she was asleep. It had come.

She neither dared to look nor move lest it should fly away. She felt upon her flushed cheeks the freshness of the beating of its wings.

Soon it seemed to recoil and its carresses changed. She felt between her cool knees the warmth of the bird's body.

She uttered a long sigh of bounteous delight, let fall backward with closed eyes her fevered head, and plucked the grass with convulsive fingers.

Then for a long while she remained motionless. At her first gesture her hand met the Swan's beak. She sat up and saw the reflection of the great bird in the river. She wished to rise but the bird prevented her.

She wished to take a little water in the

palm of her hand and moisten her flesh, but the Swan prevented her with its wing.

She clasped the bird in her arms and covered its thick feathers with kisses, making it set them up with her embraces. Then she stretched herself upon the river-bank and fell into a deep sleep.

The next morning at daybreak a new sensation awakened her with a start : something seemed to become detached from her body. A large blue egg rolled in front of her and shone like a sapphire.

She wanted to take it and play with it or else cook it in the warm ashes as she had seen the satyrs do ; but the Swan picked it up in its beak and placed it under a tuft of overhanging reeds. It stretched out its wings over the egg with its gaze fixed upon Lêda, and then with a movement of the wings slowly soared straight up into the sky to disappear in the growing daylight with the last white star.

CHAPTER III

LÊDA hoped that the following night the Swan would come back to her, and she waited for it in the reeds by the river-side near the blue egg which was born of their miraculous union.

The Eurotas was covered with swans, but her Swan was not among them. She would have recognized it from a thousand, and even with her eyes shut would have perceived its approach. But it was very certain that the one was no longer there.

Then she took off her garland of water-lily leaves, dropped it into the stream, let down her hair and began to weep.

When after a time she dried her eyes a great Satyr was near her though she had not heard his approach.

Now she was no longer like Phœbe.

She had lost her virginity. The satyrs were no longer afraid of her.

She leapt to her feet and drew back in affright.

The Satyr gently said to her : " Who are you ? "

" I am Lêda," she replied.

He was silent for a moment and then went on—

" Why are you different from the other nymphs? Why are you blue like the water and the night? "

" I do not know. "

He looked at her in great astonishment

" What are you doing here all alone? "

" I am waiting for the Swan. "

She was looking at the river. " What Swan? " he asked.

" The Swan. I did not call it, I did not see it, but it appeared. I was so surprised. I will tell you. "

She told him what had happened and parted the reeds to show him the blue egg.

The Satyr understood. He began to laugh and gave her vulgar explanations, which she stopped by putting her hand over his mouth; then she cried—

“I do not wish to know. I will not know. Oh, you have told me. Oh! it is frightful! Now I shall not be able to love the Swan, and I shall die of unhappiness.”

He seized her by the arm in his passion.

“Do not touch me!” she cried through her tears. “Oh! how happy was I this morning! I did not realize how happy I was! Now if it return I shall not love it. Now you have told me! Ah! how wicked you are!”

He embraced her and caressed her hair.

“Oh, no! no! no!” she cried. “Do not do that! Oh if the Swan were to come back! Alas! alas! all is ended.”

She stood with staring eyes and open mouth without weeping but with hands trembling with fear.

“I would like to die. I do not even

know whether I am mortal. I would like to die in the water, but I fear the naiads, lest they make me join them. Oh! what have I done!"

She sobbed bitterly in his arms. But a serious voice spake before her, and when she opened her eyes she saw the river god crowned with green leaves rising half out of the water and leaning upon a staff of light wood.

He said—

"You are quite right. But you have loved the symbol of all that is light and glorious, and you have been united to it.

"Of the symbol is born the symbol, and of the symbol will be born Beauty. It is in the blue egg which you have seen. Since the beginning of the world it has been called Helen; and the last man of all shall know of her existence.

"You were full of love because you were ignorant. For that let the blessed darkness be praised.

“ But you are a woman, too, and bear in you the obscure being who would be simply himself, whose father has not foreseen him, and whose son does not know him. I will take the germ in my waters. It shall remain in obscurity.

“ You were full of hatred because you learned the truth. I will make you forget it. For that let the blessed darkness be praised.”

She did not understand what the God had said, but she thanked him with tears.

She entered the bed of the river to purify herself from the Satyr, and when she returned to the bank she had lost every remembrance of her sorrow and her joy.

Melandryon spake no more. The women were all silent. But Rhea asked—

“ What of Kaftor and Polydeukes? You have told us nothing of them. • They were the brothers of Helen.”

"No, that is not true, they are not interesting. Helen alone was a child of the Swan."

"Why, too, do you say that the Swan wounded her with its beak? That is not in the legend, nor is it likely. Then why do you say that Lêda was blue like water in the night? You have a reason for saying it."

"Did you not hear the words of the River. Symbols must never be explained. They must not be understood. Have faith. Ah! do not doubt. The maker of the symbol has concealed a truth in it, but he need not explain it or what would be the use of the reader of symbols."

"One must not tear aside ceremonies, for they only conceal the invisible. We know that in these trees adorable nymphs are enclosed, and yet when the wood-cutter fells the trees they are dead. We know that behind us are dancing satyrs and divine nakedness but we need not turn

round, for if we do all will have disappeared.

“The undulating reflection of the springs is actually the naiad. The buck standing in the midst of the does is the reality of the Satyr. One or other of you all is Aphrodite in reality. But we must not know it, we must not seek to find it out. Such is the condition of love and joy. Praise be to the blessed darkness for it.”

IMMORTAL LOVE

(*From “Aphrodite”*)

CHAPTER I

• THE GARDENS OF THE GODDESS •

THE temple of Aphrodite-Astarte stood outside the gates of the city in an immense domain full of flowers and shadows, where the waters of the Nile flowed through seven aqueducts and maintained at all seasons a state of wonderful fertility.

This forest of flowers on the sea-shore, these deep streams, these lakes and shady meadows had been created in the desert by Ptolemy I. Since that time the sycamores planted by his orders had become giants; through the fertilizing influence of the waters the lawns had grown into meadows; the ponds had become enlarged into lakes; Nature had turned a park into a country.

The gardens were more than a valley, more than a country, more than a land;

they were a complete world enclosed within walls of stone, and ruled by a Goddess who was the soul and centre of this universe. All around this domain arose a circular terrace. Its boundary was not a wall, it was a colossal city, consisting of fourteen hundred houses. A like number of courtesans dwelt in this holy city and represented in this spot alone seventy different races.

These sacred houses were uniform in design, and had upon each door the courtesan's name who dwelt there.

Upon each side of the door were two rooms without walls upon the side next to the gardens. The room to the right was where the courtesan arrayed in all her finery sat to await the arrival of her visitors. The room on the left was at the disposal of those who wished to pass the night in the open air without sleeping on the grass.

On opening the door a passage gave entrance to a vast courtyard paved with

marble, the middle of which was adorned by an oval basin. A peristyle provided the shade around this great square of light, and formed a zone of coolness for the entrance to the seven rooms of the house. At the back stood the altar which was of red granite.

Every woman had brought from her own country a little image of the Goddess, and as it stood there upon the altar of the house it was worshipped by each one in her own tongue. Lakmî Ashtoreth, Venus, Iskhtar, Freia, Mylitta, and Cypris were some of the holy names of their Divinity of Pleasure. Some worshipped the divinity in the symbolical shapes of a sea pebble, a conical stone, or a large prickly shell. In many of the houses there was upon a wooden stand a rough statuette with thin arms, large breasts, and huge thighs. They placed a myrtle branch at the feet of the idol, strewed the altar with rose-leaves, and burnt a grain of incense

for each prayer which was granted. The Goddess was the confidante of all their sorrows, the witness of all their labours, and the supposed cause of all their pleasure. At the courtesan's death the image was placed in her fragile coffin as a guardian of her tomb.

The most beautiful of these girls came from the kingdoms of Asia. Every year vessels bearing to Alexandria gifts from tributaries or allies landed besides their cargoes a hundred virgins chosen by the priests for the service of the sacred garden. They came from Mysia, Crete, Phrygia, Babylon, and the banks of the Ganges, and there were also Jewesses among them. Some were fair of skin with impassive faces and inflexible breasts; others were dark as the earth after rain, and had gold rings through their noses, and dark hair hanging down upon their shoulders. Some came from still more distant lands; they were slender, quiet little creatures,

whose language no one understood and who looked like yellow monkeys. Their eyes were long, and their straight black hair was grotesquely arranged. These girls spent the whole of their lives like lost and frightened animals. They knew the gestures of love but declined to kiss upon the mouth. They amused themselves by playing childish games.

In a meadow apart, the fair and rosy daughters of the North lived together sleeping upon the grass. These were women from Sarmatia with triple-plaited hair, robust limbs, and square shoulders, who made themselves garlands of the branches of trees and wrestled among themselves for amusement; there were flat-nosed hairy Scythians and gigantic Teutons who terrified the Egyptians with their hair which was lighter than an old man's and their flesh which was softer than a child's; there were Gauls like animals, who laughed without reason, and young

Celts with sea-green eyes, who never went out naked.

The women of Iberia, too, who had swarthy breasts, spent their days together. They had heavy masses of hair which was skilfully arranged and did not remove the hairs from their bodies. Their firm skins and strong limbs were much in favour with the Alexandrians. They were as often employed as dancers as taken for mistresses.

In the shade of the palm-trees dwelt the daughters of Africa, the Numidians veiled in white, the Carthaginians clad in black gauze, and Negresses clad in many-coloured costumes.

There were fourteen hundred women.

When a woman once entered the sacred garden, she never left it till the first day of her old age came upon her. She gave to the temple half of her gains and the rest sufficed for her food and perfumes.

They were not slaves and each one

really possessed one of the Terrace houses; but all were not equally favoured and the more fortunate often purchased houses near their own which the owners sold to save themselves from growing thin through starvation. The latter then removed the image of their Divinity into the park and found an altar consisting of a flat stone, near which they took up their abode. The poor people knew this and sought out the women who slept in the open air near their altars; but sometimes they were neglected even by the poor, and then the unfortunate girls united in their misery, two and two, in a passionate friendship which became almost conjugal love, and shared their misfortunes.

Those without friends offered themselves as slaves to their more fortunate companions. They were forbidden to have in their service more than twelve of these poor girls, but these poor courtesans are mentioned as having the maximum

number which was composed of a selection from many races.

If a courtesan bore a son, the child was taken into the precincts of the temple for the service of her divinity. When a daughter was born she was consecrated to the service of the Goddess. The first day of her life her symbolical marriage with the son of Dionysius was celebrated. Later she entered the Didascalion, a great school situated behind the temple where little girls learned in seven classes the theory and method of all the erotic arts; the glance, the embrace, the movements of the body, caresses and the secrets of the kiss. The pupil chose the day of her first experience because desire is a command from the Goddess which must not be disobeyed; on that day she received a house on the Terrace; and some of these children, though not yet nubile, were the most popular of all. •

The interior of the Didascalion, the

seven classes, the little theatre and the peristyle of the court were ornamented with ninety-two frescoes which comprised the teaching of love. They were the life-work of a man, Cleochares of Alexandria the natural son and disciple of Apelles, who had furnished them on his death-bed. Lately Queen Berenice, who was greatly interested in this famous school and had sent her little sisters there, had ordered from Demetrios a series of marble groups to complete the decoration; but only one of them had yet been placed in position in the infants' school.

At the end of every year in the presence of all the famous courtesans, a great gathering took place at which there was extraordinary emulation among the women to win the twelve prizes offered, for they consisted of the entry into the Cotytteion, the greatest honour of which they ever dreamed.

This last monument was wrapped in

such mystery that to-day it is not possible to give a detailed description of it. We only know that it was in the shape of a triangle the base of which was a temple to the Goddess Cotytto, in whose name frightful unheard-of debauchery was committed. The two other sides of the monument consisted of eighteen houses; thirty-six courtesans dwelt there, and were much sought after by wealthy lovers; they were the Baptes of Alexandria. Once every month, on the night of the full moon, they met within the temple maddened by aphrodisiacs. The oldest of the thirty-six had to take a fatal dose of the terrible erotogenous drug. The certainty of her immediate death made her try without fear all the dangerous pleasures from which the living recoil. Her body, which soon became covered with sweat, was the centre and model of the whirling orgie; in the midst of loud wailings, cries, tears and dancing the other

naked women embraced her, mingled their hair in her sweat, rubbed themselves upon her burning skin and derived fresh ardour from the interrupted spasm of this furious agony. For three years these women lived in this way, and at the end of thirty-six months such was the intoxication of their end.

Other but less venerated sanctuaries had been built by the women in honour of the other names of Aphrodite. There was an altar consecrated to the Ouranian Aphrodite which received the chaste vows of sentimental courtesans; another to Aphrodite Apostrophia, where unfortunate love affairs were forgotten, and there were many others. But these separate altars were only efficacious and effective in the case of trivial desires. They were used day by day, and their favours were trivial ones. The suppliant who had their requests granted placed offerings of flowers on them, while those who were

not satisfied spat upon them. They were neither consecrated nor maintained by the priests and consequently their profanation was not punishable.

The discipline of the Temple was very different.

The Temple, the Mighty Temple of the Great Goddess, the most holy place in the whole of Egypt, was a colossal edifice 336 feet in length with golden gates standing at the top of seventeen steps at the end of the gardens.

The entrance was not towards the East, but in the direction of Paphos, that is to say the north-west; the rays of the sun never penetrated directly into the Sanctuary. Eighty-six columns supported the architraves, they were all tinted with purple to half their height, and the upper part of each stood out with indescribable whiteness like the bust of a woman from her attire.

Within were placed sculptured groups

representing many famous scenes, Europa and the Bull, Lêda and the Swan, the Siren and the dying Glaucos, the God Pan and a Hamadryad, and at the end of the frieze the sculptor was depicted modelling the Goddess Aphrodite herself.

CHAPTER II

MYLITTA AND MELITTA

“PURIFY yourself, stranger.”

“I shall enter pure,” Demetrios said. With the end of her hair dipped in the holy water the young guardian of the gate moistened first his eyes, then his lips and then his fingers, so that his look, the kiss from his mouth and the caress of his hands were all sanctified.

Then he advanced into the wood of Aphrodite.

Through the darkening branches he saw the sun set a dark purple which did not dazzle the eyes. It was the evening of the day when his meeting with Chrysis had disturbed his life. That day he had seen a beautiful woman upon the jetty, and addressed himself to her. She had declined his advances though he was

Demetrios the famous sculptor, a young, wealthy and handsome man and the accredited lover of Queen Berenice. To obtain her favour Chrysis, the courtesan, had imposed upon him three almost impossible conditions. She required him to present to her the silver mirror of Bacchis the famous courtesan, her friend, the ivory comb worn by Touni the wife of the High Priest, and last of all the necklace of pearls from the neck of the statue of the Goddess Aphrodite within the Holy Temple. The first two of her demands could be carried out possibly even without the shedding of blood, but her third behest would mean the committal of an act of sacrilege punishable by death, before which the boldest would hesitate. The feminine soul is so transparent, that men cannot believe it to be so. Where there is only a straight line they obstinately seek the complexity of an intricate path. This was why the soul of Chrysis, in reality

as clear as that of a little child, appeared to Demetrios more mysterious than a problem in metaphysics. When he left her on the jetty, he returned home in a dream unable to reply to the questions which assailed him. What would she do with the three gifts she had ordered him to procure her? It was impossible for her to wear or sell a famous stolen mirror, the comb of a woman who had perhaps been murdered in its acquirement, or the necklace of pearls belonging to the Goddess. By retaining possession of them she exposed herself every day to a discovery which would be fatal to her. Then why did she ask for them? Was it to destroy them? He knew that women did not rejoice in secrets and that good luck only pleased them when it was well known to every one. Then, too, by what divination or clairvoyance had she judged him to be capable of accomplishing three such extraordinary deeds?

Surely if he had wished, Chrysis might have been carried off, placed in his power and become his mistress, his wife or his slave, as he pleased. He had too the chance of destroying her. Revolutions in the past had accustomed the citizens to deaths by violence, and no one was disturbed by the disappearance of a courtesan. Chrysis must know him, and yet she dared. . . .

The more he thought of her the more her strange commands seemed to please him. How many women were her equal! how many had presented themselves to him in an unfavourable manner! What did she demand? Neither love, gold, nor jewels, but three impossible crimes! She interested him keenly. He had offered her all the treasures of Egypt: he realized now that if she had accepted them she would not have received two obols, and he would have wearied of her even before he had known her. Three crimes,

assuredly, were an uncommon salary; but she was worthy to receive it since she was the woman to demand it, and he promised himself to go on with the adventure.

To give himself no time to repent of his resolutions that very day he went to the house of Bacchis, found it empty, took the silver mirror and fled into the gardens. Must he at once go to the second victim of Chrysis? Demetrios did not think so. The wife of the High Priest Touni, who possessed the famous ivory comb, was so charming and so weak that he feared to approach her without preliminary precautions. So he turned back and walked along the great Terrace.

The courtesans were outside their dwellings like a display of flowers. There was no less diversity in their attitudes and costumes than in their ages, types and nationalities. The most beautiful, according to the tradition of Phryne, only leaving the oval of their faces uncovered, were clad

from their hair to their heels in great robes of fine wool. Others had adopted the fashion of transparent robes, through which their beauty could be distinguished in a mysterious way, as through limpid water one can see the patches of green weeds at the bottom of the river. Those whose only charm was their youth remained naked to the waist, and displayed the firmness of their breasts. But the older women, knowing how much more quickly a woman's face grows old than does the skin of the body, sat quite naked, holding their breasts.

Demetrios passed very slowly in front of them without allowing himself to admire them.

He could never view a woman's nakedness without intense emotion. He could not realize any feeling of disgust in the presence of the dead, or of insensibility with very young girls. That evening every woman could have charmed him. Provided

she kept silence and did not display any more ardour than the minimum demanded by politeness her beauty did not matter. He preferred, also, that she should have a "coarse" body, for the more his thoughts were fixed upon perfect shapes the further away from them did his desire depart. The trouble, which the impression of living beauty gave to him, was of an exclusively cerebral sensuality which reduced to naught other excitation. He recollected with agony that he had remained for an hour like an old man by the side of the most admirable woman he had ever held in his arms. Since that night he had learned to select less pure mistresses.

"Friend," a voice said, "do you not know me?"

He turned, shook his head and went on his way, for he never visited the same girl twice. That was the only principle he carried out in his visits to the gardens.

"Clonarion!"

"Gnathene!"

"Plango!"

"Mnaïs!"

"Crobyle!"

"Ioesa!"

They called out their names as he passed, and some added, as a further inducement, a phrase upon their own ardent nature. Demetrios continued his walk; he was inclined, as his usual custom was, to pick out one of them haphazard, when a little girl dressed in blue spoke to him softly.

"Open the door for me," he said. "I wish to speak to you."

The little girl jumped gaily to her feet and knocked twice with the knocker. An old slave opened the door.

"Gorgo," the girl said, "bring some wine and cakes."

She led the way into her chamber, which was very plain, like that of all very young

courtesans. Two large beds, a little tapestry and a few chairs comprised the furniture, but through a large open bay could be seen the gardens, the sea, and the roadstead of Alexandria. Demetrios remained standing looking at the distant city.

The sun sinking behind the harbour, that incomparable glory of a coast town, the calm sky, the purple waters, were they not enough to bring silence to any soul bursting with joy or sorrow! What footsteps would they not stay, what pleasure suspend and what voice they not hush? Demetrios watched: a swell of torrent-like flame seemed to leap out from the sun which had half sunk into the sea and to flow straight to the curved edge of the wood of Aphrodite. From one to another of the two horizons the rich purple tone overran the Mediterranean in zones of shades without transition from golden red to pale purple. Between the moving splendour and the green mirror of the Mareotis

lake the white mass of the city was clothed in reddish violet reflections. The different aspects of its twenty thousand flat houses marvellously speckled it with twenty thousand patches of colour perpetually changing with the decreasing phasis of the rays in the west. Now it was rapid and fiery; then the sun was engulfed with almost startling suddenness and the first approach of the night caused a tremor throughout the earth and a hidden breeze.

“Here are figs, sweets, honey and wine. You must eat the figs before it is dark.”

The girl came in with a laugh. She made the young man sit down and took up her position upon his knees, refastening, as she did so, a rose in her hair which was in danger of falling out.

Demetrios uttered an exclamation of surprise, she looked so young and childish that he felt full of pity for her.

“But you are not a woman!” he cried.

"I am not a woman! By the two Goddesses what am I then? a Thracian, a porter or an old philosopher?"

"How old are you?"

"Ten years and a half. Eleven years. You can say eleven. I was born in the gardens. My mother is a Milesian, her name is Pythias, nicknamed the 'Goat.' Shall I send for her if you think I am too young? She has a soft skin and is very beautiful."

"You have been to the Didascalion?"

"I am still there in the sixth class. I shall finish there next year; it will not be any too soon."

"What don't you like then?"

"Ah! if you only knew how hard to please the mistresses are. They make you begin the same lesson twenty-five times, and it is all about useless things which the men never desire. Then one tires oneself for nothing, and I do not like that. Come, have a fig; not that one,

it is not ripe. I will show you a new way to eat them—look.”

“I know it. It takes longer, but it is not a better way. I believe you are a good pupil.”

“Oh! what I know I have learned by myself. The mistresses try to make out they are stronger than we are. They are more experienced, but they have not invented anything.”

“Have you many lovers?”

“They are all too old; it is inevitable. The young are so foolish! They only care for women of forty. I sometimes see one pass as good-looking as Eros, and you ought to see the woman he picks out—a hateful hippopotamus! It makes one turn pale. I hope I shall not live to be the age of those women; I should be ashamed to undress. That is why I am so glad that I am young. But let me kiss you. I like you very much.”

Here the conversation took a turn, and

Demetrios soon saw that his scruples were unnecessary in the case of such a well-informed young woman.

"What is your name?" he asked her presently.

"Melitta. Did you not see the name over the door?"

"I did not look at it."

"You could see it in the room. It has been written on the walls. I shall soon have to have them repainted."

Demetrios raised his head. The four walls of the room were covered with inscriptions.

"Well, that is very curious," he said. "May I read them?"

"Yes, if you like. I have no secrets."

He read them. The name of Melitta was there several times, coupled with various men's names and strange designs. There were tender and comic phrases. Lovers detailed the charms of the little courtesan, or made jokes upon her. All

that was not very interesting; but when he was near the end of his reading he gave a start of surprise.

"What is this? What is it? Tell me."

"What? Where? What is the matter?"

"Here. This name. Who wrote that?"

His finger was pointing to the name of Chrysis.

"Ah," she replied, "I wrote that."

"But who is Chrysis?"

"She is my great friend."

"I don't doubt that. That is not what I am asking you. Which Chrysis is it? There are so many."

"Mine is the most beautiful Chrysis of Galilee."

"You know her, then! Tell me about her! Where was her home? Where does she live? Who is her lover? Tell me all about her."

He sat down upon the bed and took the girl upon his knees.

"Are you in love with her?" she said.

"What does it matter? Tell me what you know about her; I am anxious to hear."

"Oh! I know nothing at all about her—very little indeed. She has been twice to see me, and you can imagine that I did not ask her questions about her relations. I was too pleased to see her to waste time in idle conversation."

"What is she like?"

"She is like a pretty girl; what do you want me to say? Must I name all the parts of her body and say that they are all beautiful? Ah! she is a real woman."

"You know nothing about her, then?" Demetrios asked.

"I know she comes from Galilee; that she is nearly twenty, and lives in the Jews' quarter, on the east of the city, near the gardens. That is all."

"Can you tell me nothing of her life or tastes?"

"The first night she came here she came

with her lover. Then she came by herself, and she has promised to come and see me again.

“Do you know any other friend of hers in the gardens?”

“Yes; a woman from her country—Chimairis, a poor woman.”

“Where does she live? I want to see her.”

“She sleeps in the wood. She has done so for a year. She sold her house. But I know where her nest is, and I can take you there if you wish. Put on my sandals for me, please.”

Demetrios rapidly fastened the leather thongs of the sandals upon Melitta's little feet, and they went out together.

They walked for some distance. The park was immense. Here and there a girl beneath a tree called out her name as they passed. Melitta knew a few, whom she embraced without stopping. As she passed a worn altar she gathered three

large flowers from the grass and placed them on the stone.

It was not yet quite dark. The intense light of the summer days has something durable about it which vaguely lingers in the dusk. The sprinkling of small stars, hardly brighter than the sky itself, twinkled gently, and the shadows of the branches remained vague and indefinite.

“Ah!” said Melitta, “here is mother.”

A woman clad in blue-striped muslin was coming slowly towards them. As soon as she saw the child she ran to her, picked her up in her arms, and kissed her fondly on the cheeks.

“My little girl! my little love, where are you going?”

“I am taking some one to see Chimairis. Are you taking a walk too?”

“Corinna has been confined. Have been to her, and I dined at her bedside.”

“Is it a boy?”

“Twins, my dear; as rosy as wax dolls.

You can go and see her to-night; she will show them to you."

"Oh, how nice! Two little courtesans. What are they to be called?"

"Pannychis—both of them, because they were born on the eve of the festival of Aphrodite. It is a divine omen. They will be beautiful!"

She put down the child, and, turning to Demetrios, said—

"What do you think of my daughter? Have I not good cause to be proud of her?"

"You can be satisfied with one another," he calmly replied.

"Kiss mother," Melitta said.

He did so, and Pythias kissed him on the mouth as they separated.

Demetrios went a little further still beneath the trees, while the courtesan turned her head to watch them. At last they reached the spot they sought, and Melitta said—

"Here it is."

Chimairis was squatting on her left heel in a little turfy glade between two trees and a bush. She had beneath her a red rag, which was her sole remaining garment in the daytime, and on which she lay when the men passed. Demetrios looked at her with growing interest. She had the feverish look of some thin, dark women whose tawny bodies seem to be consumed by ever-present ardour. Her great lips, her eager gaze, her livid eyes, gave her a double expression—that of covetous sensuality and exhaustion. As Chimairis had sold everything—even her toilet instruments—her hair was in indescribable disorder, while the down upon her body gave her something of the appearance of a shameless and hairy savage.

Near her was a great stag, fastened to a tree by a gold chain which had once adorned her mistress's breast.

"Chimairis," Melitta said, "get up. Some one wants to speak to you."

The Jewess looked, but did not move. Demetrios approached.

"Do you know Chrysis?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Do you see her often?"

"Yes."

"Can you tell me about her?"

"No."

"Why not? Can't you do so?"

"No."

Melitta was surprised.

"Speak to him," she said. "Have confidence in him. He loves her and wishes her well."

"I can clearly see that he loves her," Chimairis replied. "If he loves her he wishes her ill. If he loves her I will not speak."

Demetrios trembled with anger, but did not speak.

"Give me your hand," the Jewess said to him. "I will see whether I am mistaken."

She took the young man's left hand and

turned towards the moonlight. Melitta leant over to watch, although she did not know how to read the mysterious lines; but their fatality attracted her.

“What do you see?” Demetrios asked.

“I see—may I tell you what I see? Shall you be pleased? Will you believe me? First of all I see happiness, but that is in the past. I see love, too, but that is lost in blood.”

“Mine?”

“The blood of a woman. Then the blood of another woman; and then, a little later, your own.”

Demetrios shrugged his shoulders.

Melitta uttered a cry.

“She is frightened,” Chimairis went on. “But this concerns neither her nor me. Events must come to pass, since we cannot prevent them. From before your birth your destiny was certain. Go away. I shall say no more.”

She let his hand drop.

CHAPTER III

IMMORTAL LOVE AND MORTAL DEATH

“A WOMAN’S blood. Afterwards the blood of another woman. Afterwards thine; but a little later.”

Demetrios repeated these words as he walked and a vague belief in them oppressed him with sadness. He had never believed in oracles drawn from the bodies of victims or from the movements of the planets. Such affinities seemed to him much too problematic. But the complex lines of the hand had of themselves a horoscopic aspect which was entirely individual and which he regarded with uneasiness. Thus the prediction remained in his mind.

He, too, gazed at the palm of his left hand where his life was displayed in

mysterious and ineffaceable lines. He saw the signs without being able to understand their meaning, and passing his hand across his eyes he changed the subject of his meditation.

Chrysis, Chrysis, Chrysis.

The name beat in him like a fever. To satisfy her, to conquer her, to enclose her in his arms, to flee away with her to Syria, Greece, Rome or elsewhere, any place, in fact, where he had no mistresses and she no lovers : that was what he had to do and to do at once !

Of the three presents she had demanded one was already obtained. Two others remained to be procured, the comb and the necklace.

"First the comb," he thought. He hastened his steps.

Every evening after sunset the wife of the High Priest sat with her back to the forest upon a marble seat from which a view of the sea could be obtained, and

Demétrios was aware of this, for Touni, like many others, had been enamoured of him, and once she had told him that the day he desired her he could take her.

Thither he made his way.

She was there; but she did not see him approach; she was reclining with her eyes closed and her arms outstretched.

She was an Egyptian. Her name was Touni. She wore a thin tunic of bright purple without clasps or girdle, and with no other embroidery than two black stars upon her breasts. The thin stuff reached down to her knees and her little round feet were shod with shoes of blue leather. Her skin was very swarthy, her lips were very thick, her fragile and supple waist seemed bowed down by the weight of her full breast. She was sleeping with open lips and quietly dreaming.

Demetrios took his seat in silence by her side. •

He gradually drew nearer to her. A

young shoulder, smooth and dark and muscular, delicately offered itself to him.

Lower down the purple muslin tunic was open at the thigh. Demetrios gently touched her, but she did not awake. Her dream changed but was not dispelled.

The eternal sea shimmered beneath a moon which was like a vast cup of blood, but still Touni slept on with bowed head.

The purple of the moon upon the horizon reached her from across the sea. Its glorious and fateful light bathed her in a flame which seemed motionless; but slowly the shadow withdrew from the Egyptian woman; one by one her black stars appeared, and at last there suddenly emerged from the shadows the comb, the royal comb desired by Chrysis.

Then the sculptor took in his two hands Touni's sweet face and turned it towards him. She opened her eyes which grew big with surprise.

"Demetrios! Demetrios! You!"

Her two arms seized hold upon him.

"Oh!" she murmured in a voice vibrating with happiness, "oh! you have come, you are there. Is it you, Demetrios, who has awakened me with your hands? Is it you, son of my Goddess, O God of my body and life?"

Demetrios made a movement as if to draw back, but she at once came suddenly quite close to him.

"No," she said, "what do you fear? I am not a woman to be feared by you, one surrounded by the omnipotence of the High Priest. Forget my name, Demetrios. Women in their lovers' arms have no name. I am not the woman you believe me to be. I am only a creature who loves you and is filled with desire for you."

Demetrios made her no answer.

"Listen once more," she went on. "I know whom you possess. I do not desire to be your mistress, nor do I aspire to become my Queen's rival. No, Demetrios,

do with me what you will : look upon me as a little slave whom one takes and casts aside in a moment. Take me like one of the lowest of those poor courtesans who wait by the side of the pathway for furtive and abortive love. In fact what am I but one of them? Have the Gods given me anything more than they have bestowed upon the least of all my slaves? You at least have the beauty which comes from the Gods."

Demetrios gazed at her still more gravely.

"What do you think, unhappy woman," he asked, "also comes from the Gods?"

"Love."

"Or death."

She got up.

"What do you mean? *Death*. . . . Yes, death. But that is so far away from me. In sixty years' time I shall think of it. Why do you speak to me of death, Demetrios?"

He simply said—

“Death to-night.”

She burst into a frightened laugh.

“This evening . . . surely not . . . who says so? Why should I die? . . . answer me, speak, what horrible jest is this? . . .”

“You are condemned.”

“By whom?”

“By your destiny.”

“How do you know that?”

“I knew it because I, too, Touni, am involved in your destiny.”

“And my destiny wills that I die?”

“Your destiny demands that you die by my hand upon this seat.”

He seized her by the wrist.

“Demetrios,” she sobbed in her fear, “I will not cry out. I will not call for help. Let me speak.”

She wiped the sweat from her forehead. •

“If death comes to me through you,

death will be pleasant. I will accept it, I desire it; but listen to me."

She dragged him into the darkness of the wood, stumbling from stone to stone.

"Since you have in your hands," she continued, "everything we receive from the Gods, the thrill which gives life and that which takes it away, open your two hands upon my eyes, Demetrios . . . that of love and that of death, and if you do so, I shall die without regret."

He gazed at her without replying, but she thought she could read assent in his face.

Transfigured for the second time she lifted up her face with a fresh expression in it, one of new-born desire driving away terror with the strength of desperation.

She said no more, but from between her parted lips each breath seemed to be a song of victory.

She seized him in her arms crying—

“Ah! Kill me . . . kill me, Demetrios, why are you waiting!”

He rose, gazed once more at Touni as she lifted up her great eyes to him, and taking one of the two gold pins from her hair, he buried it in her left breast.

CHAPTER IV

APHRODITE'S PEARLS

YET this woman would have given him her comb and even her hair for love of him.

It was simply a scruple which had prevented him asking her for it: Chrysis had very clearly desired a crime and not the ancient ornament from a young woman's hair. That was the reason he believed it his duty to take part in the shedding of blood.

He might have considered that oaths made to a woman during an access of love can be forgotten afterwards without any great harm being done to the moral worth of the lover who has sworn them and that, if ever this involuntary forgetfulness were excusable, it was so in the

circumstances when the life of another woman, who was quite innocent, was being weighed in the balance. But Demetrios did not stay to reason thus. The adventure he had undertaken seemed to him too curious to be stayed by incidents of violence.

So after cutting off Touni's hair and concealing the ivory comb in his clothing, he without further reflection undertook the third of the tasks ordered by Chrysis : the taking of the necklace of Aphrodite.

There was no question of entering the temple by the great door. The twelve hermaphrodites who kept the door would no doubt have allowed Demetrios to enter, in spite of the order which refused admission to the unsanctified in the priest's absence; but what was the use of thus simply establishing his guilt for the future when there was a secret entry leading to the sanctuary. Demetrios wended his way to a lonely part of the wood where the

necropolis of the High Priests of the Goddess was situated. He counted the tombs, opened the door of the seventh, and closed it behind him.

With great difficulty, for the stone was heavy, he raised a slab within the tomb which disclosed a marble staircase and descended it step by step.

He knew that it was possible to take sixty steps in a straight line and then it was necessary to advance by feeling the wall to save falling down the subterranean staircase of the temple.

The coolness of this deep passage gradually calmed him. In a few minutes he reached the end of it, ascended steps and opened the door.

The night was clear in the open, but black in the holy place. When he had cautiously closed the heavy door, he felt himself to be trembling as if he had been gripped by the coldness of the stones. He dared not lift his eyes. The black silence

terrified him; the darkness seemed to him alive with the unknown. He put his hand to his brow like a man who did not desire to awaken lest he might find himself alive. At last he had the courage to look.

In a gleam of bright moonlight the Goddess was visible upon a pedestal of red stone loaded with hanging treasures. She was naked and tenderly tinted like a woman; in one hand she held her mirror and with the other she was adorning her beauty with a necklace of seven rows of pearls. A pearl, larger than the rest, long and silvery, gleamed at her breast like a crescent. These were the actual holy pearls.

Demetrios was lost in ineffable adoration. He believed in truth that Aphrodite herself was there. He could no longer recognize his own work, so deep was the abyss between that which it used to be and had become. He extended his arms and murmured the mysterious words by which

the Goddess is addressed in the Phrygian ceremonies.

Supernatural, luminous, immaculate, nude and pure the vision seemed to hover over the stone pedestal softly palpitating. He fixed his eyes upon it, though he feared that the caress of his gaze would make this feeble hallucination vanish in the air. He advanced slowly and touched with his finger the rosy toe as if to assure himself of the existence of the statue, and being incapable of stopping, so great was its attraction for him, he mounted and stood by its side, placing his hands upon the white shoulders and looking into the eyes.

He trembled, he faltered and began to laugh with joy. His hands wandered over the bare arms, and he clasped the cold hard waist with all his strength. He gazed at himself in the mirror, grasped the necklace of pearls, took it off, made it gleam in the moonlight and then fearfully replaced it. He kissed the hand, the round

neck, the undulating throat and the half-open marble mouth. Then he withdrew to the edge of the pedestal and gazed tenderly at the lovely bowed head.

The hair of the statue had been arranged in the oriental fashion and lightly veiled the forehead. The half-shut eyes were prolonged in a smile. The lips were separated as if vanquished by a kiss.

He silently replaced the seven rows of round pearls upon the glorious breast and descended to gaze upon the idol from a greater distance.

Then he seemed to awaken. He remembered his errand which he had up to then failed to accomplish, and realized how monstrous a project it was. He felt his blood burn to the temples.

The memory of Chrysis came to him like a common apparition. He enumerated everything which was at all doubtful in the courtesan's beauty; her full lips, her

dishevelled hair and her careless walk. He had forgotten what her hands were like, but he imagined them to be large in order to add an odious detail to the picture which he was attempting to reject. His state of mind was like that of a man who had been surprised at dawn by his dear mistress in the arms of a common girl, and could offer no explanation to himself as to why he allowed himself the previous evening to be tempted. He could find no excuse for himself nor even a serious reason. Evidently during the day he had suffered from a fit of passing madness, a physical trouble, a malady. He felt himself to be cured but still intoxicated with stupefaction.

To complete the recovery of his senses he leant against the temple wall and stood for a long time before the statue. The moonlight continued to shine through the square opening in the roof; Aphrodite shone resplendent; and as the eyes of the

statue were in the shadow he tried to catch their expression.

He spent the whole night like this. Then daylight came and the statue in turn assumed the living rose colour of the dawn and the golden tint of the sunlight.

Demetrios could no longer think. The ivory comb and the silver mirror which he carried within his tunic had disappeared from his memory. He gently abandoned himself to serene contemplation.

Outside the confused singing and twittering of the birds sounded in the gardens. The talking and laughing of women's voices could be heard outside the walls. The life and movement of the morning was spreading over the awakened land. Demetrios was full of pleasant ideas.

The sun was high and the shadow from the roof had moved before he heard the confused sound of light footsteps on the outer staircase.

No doubt it was the prelude of a sacri-

fice to the Goddess by a procession of young women, who came to perform their vows or to offer up their prayers before the statue on the first day of the festival of Aphrodite.

Demetrios wished to flee. The sacred pedestal opened at the back in a way that only the priests and the sculptor knew. That was the position occupied by the hierophant from which he recited to a young girl with a clear strong voice the miraculous discourse which came from the statue on the third day of the festival. From that place the gardens could be reached. Demetrios entered and stood before a bronze-edged opening which pierced the thick stone.

The two golden gates slowly opened. Then the procession entered.

CHAPTER V

DICE—THE VENUS THROW

ABOUT the middle of the night Chrysis was awakened by three knocks at the door.

She was sleeping with her two friends Rhodis and Myrtocleia, and rising cautiously she went down and half opened the door.

A voice came from without. "Who is it, Djala? Who is it?" she asked.

"Naucrates wishes to speak to you. I told him that you were engaged."

"Oh, how foolish! Most certainly I will see him. I am not engaged. Come in, Naucrates. I am in my chamber."

She went back to bed. Naucrates remained for a moment at the door as if he feared to be indiscreet. The two girls, who were musicians, opened their sleepy eyes

but could not rend themselves from their dreams.

"Sit down," said Chrysis. "There need be no false modesty between us two. I know that you have not come to see me. What do you want?"

Naucrates was a well-known philosopher who for more than twenty years had been the lover of Bacchis and had not deceived her, though more from indolence than fidelity be it said. His grey hair was cut short, his beard was pointed after the manner of Demosthenes and his moustaches were even with his lips. He wore a great white woollen robe.

"I have brought you an invitation," he said. "Bacchis is giving a dinner tomorrow to be followed by a fête. We shall be seven including yourself. Be sure you come."

"A fête? What is the occasion?"

"She has given freedom to her most beautiful slave Aphrodisia. There will be

dancers and musicians. I think your two friends are engaged to be there, and ought not to be here now. They are at this moment rehearsing at Bacchis' house."

"Oh! that is right," Rhodis cried, "we had forgotten it. Arise, Myrto, we are very late."

But Chrysis declared—

"No! not yet! It is too bad to take away my friends. If I had suspected I should not have admitted you. Oh! they are dressed already!"

"Our dresses are not very elaborate," the girl answered. "We are not beautiful enough to spend much time over our toilettes."

"Shall I then see you at the temple at some hour to-morrow?" Chrysis asked them.

"Yes, to-morrow morning, we shall take doves as our offering. I am taking a drachma from your purse, Chrysis. We shall not otherwise have the money to purchase them. Good-bye till to-morrow."

They ran out. Naucrates gazed for some time at the door which had closed behind them, then he rose, saying—

“Can I tell Bacchis that she may reckon upon you?”

“I will come,” Chrysis replied.

The philosopher bowed to her and slowly departed.

As soon as he had gone Chrysis clasped her hands and spoke aloud although she was alone.

“Bacchis, Bacchis, he comes from her and does not know. Is the mirror then still in her possession? Demetrios has forgotten me. If he has hesitated on the first day, I am lost, he will do nothing. But it is quite possible that he has obtained it. Bacchis has other mirrors which she uses more often. Without a doubt she has not found out yet. Ye Gods! Ye Gods! there is no way of finding out. Ah! Djala! Djala!”

The slave entered.

"Give me my dice. I wish to throw them," Chrysis said.

She tossed in the air the four dice.

"Oh! oh! Djala, look!"

The throw had resulted in the dice each presenting a different face. It was thirty-five chances to one against this happening and it was the highest scoring throw of all.

Djala coldly observed—

"What did you wish?"

"Quite true," Chrysis said in disappointed tones. "I forgot to utter a wish. I thought of something but said nothing. Does not that count just the same?"

"I don't think so; you must start again."

Chrysis made a second throw. This time the result was not decisive, it resulted in both good and bad omens and required another throw to make its meaning clear.

The third throw Chrysis made with one of the dice only, and when she saw the result burst into tears.

Djala said nothing but was herself uneasy. Chrysis lay upon her bed weeping with her hair in disorder. At last she turned round with an angry movement.

"Why did you make me begin again? I am sure the first throw counted."

"It would have done if you had expressed a wish, but you did not. You are the only one who knows what your desire was."

"Besides, dice prove nothing. It is a Greek game. I don't believe in it. I am going to try something else."

She dried her tears and crossed the room. She took from the table a box of white counters, selected twenty-two of them, and then with the point of a pearl hook scratched one after the other the letters of the Hebrew alphabet upon them.

"I rely upon this. It never deceives one," she said. "Raise the front of your robe, that shall be my bag."

She threw the twenty-two counters into the slave's tunic, repeating in her mind—

“Shall I wear Aphrodite's necklace? Shall I wear Aphrodite's necklace? Shall I wear Aphrodite's necklace?”

She drew out the tenth arcanum which clearly meant—

“Yes.”

CHAPTER VI

THE ROSE OF CHRYSIS THE LOVELY

It was a white, blue, yellow, red and green procession.

Thirty courtesans advanced carrying baskets of flowers, snow-white doves with red feet, veils of the most fragile azure and valuable ornaments.

An old white-bearded priest, enveloped from head to foot in stiff unbleached stuff walked in front of this procession of youth and guided towards the stone altar the line of devout worshippers.

They sang, and their song rose and fell like the sound of the sea and the winds. The first two carried harps, which they held in the palm of their left hands and bent forward like sickles of slender wood.

One of them advanced and said—

“Tryperha, beloved Cypris, offers thee this blue veil which she has spun herself so that thou mayst continue thy goodness to her.”

Another said—

“Mousairon lays at the feet of the Goddess of the beautiful crown, these garlands and bouquets of flowers. She has worn them at the fête and has invoked thy name in the intoxication of their perfumes. O Conqueror, receive these spoils of love.”

Another one said—

“As an offering to thee, golden Cytheræ, Timo consecrates this sinuous bracelet. Mayst thou entwine thy vengeance around the throat of the one thou knowest, as this silver serpent entwined itself about these naked arms.”

Myrtocleia and Rhodis advanced hand in hand.

“Here are two doves from Smyrna with wings as white as caresses and feet as red

as kisses. O double Goddess of Amathonte, accept them from our joint hands if it is true that the fair Adonis did not satisfy thee and a still more sweet embrace sometimes disturbed thy slumbers."

A very young courtesan followed, saying—

"Aphrodite Peribasia receive my virginity with this stained tunic of mine. I am Pannychis of Pharos; since last night I have vowed myself to thy worship."

Another said—

"Dorothea begs thee, charitable Epistrophia, to banish from her mind the desire placed there by Eros or at least to inflame for her the eyes of the lover who refuses her. She presents to thee this branch of myrtle because it is the tree thou preferest."

Another said—

"Upon thy altar, Paphia, Calliston places sixty drachmas of silver, the balance

of a gift she has received from Cleomenes. Give her a still more generous lover, if the offering seems to thee acceptable."

The only one left in front of the idol was a blushing child who had taken the last place. She held in her hand nothing but a tiny garland of flowers, and the priest treated her with contempt because of the smallness of her offering.

She said—

"I am not rich enough to give thee pieces of gold, great Goddess. Besides, what could I give thee which thou dost not already possess. Here are green and yellow flowers woven as a garland for thy feet."

The procession seemed to be at an end and the other courtesans were about to retrace their steps when a woman was seen standing at the door.

She had nothing in her hand and seemed to have come to offer her beauty to the Goddess. Her hair was like two waves of

gold, two deep billows full of shadow engulfing the ears and twisted in seven turns at the throat. Her nose was fine, with expressive and palpitating nostrils, and beneath it was a full and coral coloured mouth with rounded mobile corners to it. The supple lines of the body undulated at each step she took.

Her eyes were wonderful; they were blue but dark and gleaming as well, and changed like moonstones, as she held them half closed beneath her long lashes. The glances of those eyes were like the sirens' songs.

The priest turned towards her and waited for her to speak.

She said—

“Chrysis offers up her prayer to thee, O Chrysea. Receive the paltry offering she lays at thy feet. Hear and aid, love and solace her who lives according to thy pattern and for the worship of thy name.”

- She extended her hands golden with rings and bowed her knees before the Goddess.

The vague chant recommenced. The sound of the harps ascended towards the statue with the smoke of the incense which the priest was burning in a swinging censor.

She slowly rose and presented a bronze mirror which had been hanging at her girdle.

“To thee,” she said, “Astarte, Goddess of the Night, who minglest hands and lips and whose symbol is like unto the footprint of the hinds upon the earth of Syria, Chrysis consecrates her mirror. It has seen the eyes and the gleam of love in them, the hair clinging to the temples after the rites of thy ceremonial, O thou warrior with relentless hands thou mingler of bodies and mouths.”

The priest placed the mirror at the foot of the statue. Chrysis drew from her

golden hair a long comb of red copper, the sacred metal of the Goddess.

"To thee," she said, "Anadyomene, who wast born of the blood-hued dawn and the foaming smile of the sea, to thee, whose nakedness is like the gleam of pearls, who fastenest thy moist hair with ribbons of seaweed, Chrysis dedicates her comb. It has been plunged in her hair disordered by movements in thy name."

She handed the comb to the old man and leant her head to the right to take off her emerald necklace.

"To thee," she said, "O Hetaira, who wipest away the blushes of shamefaced virgins and teaches them the immodest laugh, to thee, for whom we barter our love, Chrysis dedicates her necklace. She received it from a man whose name she does not know and each emerald represents a kiss where thou hast dwelt for a moment."

She bowed herself once again and for

a longer space as she placed the necklace in the priest's hands and took a step as if to depart.

But the priest detained her.

"What do you ask from the Goddess in return for these precious offerings?"

She smiled and shook her head, saying—

"I ask for nothing."

Then she walked along the row of women, took a rose from a basket and raised it to her lips as she went out.

One by one all the women followed her and the door closed upon an empty temple.

Demetrios had remained alone concealed in the bronze pedestal.

He had not lost a gesture or a word of the whole of this scene, and when it was ended he remained for a long while without moving, being once again in a state of torment, passion and irresolution.

He had believed himself cured of the madness of the previous night and thought

that nothing could ever again hurl him into this shadow of the unknown.

But he had reckoned without the woman.

Women! women! if you desire to be loved, show yourself, return, be ever-present! The emotion he had felt at the entrance of the courtesan was so overwhelming and complete that there could be no thought of opposing it by an effort of the will. Demetrios was bound like a barbarian slave to the conqueror's chariot. The thought that he had freed himself was a delusion. Without knowing it and quite naturally she had placed her hand upon him.

He had seen her approach, for she wore the same yellow robe she had done when he met her on the jetty. She walked with slow and graceful steps with undulating motion of the hips. She had come straight towards him as if she guessed he were concealed behind the stone.

From the first he realized that he had

again fallen at her feet. When she took from her girdle the mirror of shining bronze, she gazed at herself in it for a time before handing it to the priest, and the splendour of her eyes became dazzling. When to take her copper comb she put her hand to her hair and lifted her bent arm, the beautiful lines of her body were displayed beneath her robe and the sunlight glistened upon the tiny beads of perspiration on her skin. When, last of all, to unfasten and take off her necklace of heavy emeralds she put aside the thick silk which shielded her breast and left but a little space full of shadow with just room for the insertion of a bouquet, Demetrios felt himself seized with frenzy.

But then she began to speak and each word of hers was suffering to him. She, a beautiful vase, white as the statue itself and with gleaming golden hair, seemed to insist upon pleasure. She told of her deeds in the service of the Goddess. Even

the ease with which her favours were obtainable attracted Demetrios to her. How true it is that a woman is not entirely seductive to her lover unless she gives him ground for jealousy!

So, after presenting to the Goddess her green necklace in exchange for the one for which she was hoping, when Chrysis returned to the city she took with her a man's will in her mouth with the little rose the stalk of which she was biting.

Demetrios waited till he was alone in the holy place; then he emerged from his retreat.

He looked at the statue in anguish expecting a struggle within him. But being incapable of renewing, after so short an interval, such violent emotion, he remained wonderfully calm and without any preliminary remorse.

He carelessly ascended to the statue, took off the necklace of real pearls from its bowed neck and concealed it within his raiment.

CHAPTER VII

QUEEN BERENICE

HE walked very rapidly in the hope of overtaking Chrysis on the road leading to the city, fearing if he lingered that he might become cowardly and irresolute once again.

The road, white with heat, was so luminous that Demetrios closed his eyes as if he had been in the midday sunlight. In that way he walked without seeing where he was going, and he had only just escaped colliding with four black slaves who were walking in front of a cortège when a little musical voice softly said—

“Beloved! how glad I am!”

He lifted his head: it was Queen Berenice reclining in her litter.

She ordered the bearers to stop and stretched out her arms to her lover.

Demetrios was much annoyed; but he could not refuse, so he slipped into the litter, with a sullen air.

Then Queen Berenice was filled with joy and rolled upon her cushions like a playful cat.

Now this litter was a room and twenty-four slaves carried it. Twelve women could easily lie within amid its blue tapestry, cushions and stuffs; and it was so lofty that it was not possible to touch the ceiling even with a fan. It was greater in length than in breadth, closed in front, but on the other three sides there were three very light yellow curtains, through which the light came with dazzling brightness. The floor was of cedar-wood covered with orange silk. Within it a lighted lamp struggled with the daylight and its ever changing shadows. Here Queen Berenice reclined between two Persian slaves who gently fanned her with fans of peacock's feathers.

She invited the young sculptor to her side with a look and repeated—

“Beloved, I am pleased.” She put her hand upon his cheek.

“I was seeking you, beloved. Where have you been? I have not seen you since the day before yesterday. If I had not met you I should have shortly died of grief. Alone in this great litter I was very dull. When passing over the bridge of Hêrmes I threw all my jewels into the water to make rings. You can see that I have neither rings nor necklaces now. I am like a little pauper at your feet.”

She turned to him and kissed him upon the lips. The two fan-bearers withdrew a little further, and when Queen Berenice began to speak in a low voice they put their fingers in their ears to pretend that they were not listening.

But Demetrios did not reply, for he hardly heard her and was quite deranged. He could only see the young Queen's smile

on her red lips, and the black cushion of her hair which was always loosely arranged to serve as a pillow for her weary head.

She said—

“ Beloved, I have wept during the night. My bed was cold. When I awakened, I stretched out my naked arms on each side of my body and I did not touch you, nor could my hand find this hand of yours I am now embracing. I expected you in the morning and since the full moon you have not come. I sent my slaves into every quarter of the city and I condemned them to death when they returned without you. Where have you been? Were you at the Temple? You were not in the gardens with the foreign women? No, I can see from your eyes that you were not. Then what were you doing so long away from me? Were you before the statue? Yes, I am sure you were there. You love it more now than you love me. It is very like me, it has my eyes, my mouth, my

breasts; but that is what you seek. As for me I am poor and forlorn. You are weary of me and I can see it clearly. You think of your marble and your ugly statues as if I were not more beautiful than all of them, as well as being alive, loving, good, ready to give all that you will accept and resigned to your refusals. But you will have nothing. You would not be king, you would not be a god and worshipped in a temple of your own. You will hardly, even, consent to love me now."

She withdrew her feet beneath her and leant upon her hand.

"I would do anything in the world to see you at the palace, beloved. If you no longer desire me tell me who attracts you and she shall be my friend. The women of my court are beautiful. I have twelve who from their birth have been kept in my gynæceum and are ignorant that men exist. They shall all be your mistresses if you come and see me after them. Others

I have with me who have had more lovers than the sacred courtesans and are expert in love. Say one word. I have, too, a thousand foreign slaves : those you desire shall be given to you. I will dress them like myself, in yellow silk, gold and silver.

“No, you are the handsomest and coldest of men. You love no one, you lend yourself simply out of charity for those whom your eyes have filled with love. You allow me to obtain my happiness from your presence, but only in the way a beast allows itself to be led, looking elsewhere. You are full of condescension. Ye Gods ! Ye Gods ! I shall end by separating from you, young coxcomb whom all the city adores and no one can make weep. I have others besides women at the palace. I have strong Ethiopians who have chests of bronze and arms knotted with muscles. I shall soon forget you. But the day I am sure that your absence no longer makes me suffer, that I have replaced you, I will

send you from the top of the bridge of Hêrmes to join my necklaces and rings like a jewel I have worn too long. Ah! what it is to be a queen!"

She raised herself and seemed to be waiting for an answer. But Demetrios still remained impassible and made no more movement than if he had not heard.

"Do you not understand?"

He nonchalantly leant upon his elbow as he said in a very unconcerned way—

"I have just had an idea for a story.

"Long ago before Thrace was conquered by your father's ancestors it was overrun by wild animals and a few timid men dwelt there as well.

"The animals were very fine; there were lions red as the sun, tigers streaked like the evening and bears black as night.

"The men were small and flat-nosed, clad in old hairless skins, and armed with big spears and clumsy bows. They hid themselves in mountain caves, behind huge

blocks of stone which they moved with the greatest difficulty. Their life was spent in hunting. There was blood in the forests.

"The land was so mournful that the Gods had deserted it. When at the break of day Artemis left Olympus his path was never towards the north. The wars there never disturbed Ares. The absence of flutes and citharas turned away Apollo from it. The triple ~~H~~ecate shone there alone like the face of a Medusa upon a petrified land.

"Now a man came there to dwell; a man of a more fortunate race, who did not walk about clad in skins like the savages in the mountains.

"He wore a long white robe which trailed behind him a little. Through the beautiful glades of the forest he loved to wander at night in the moonlight holding in his hand a little lute with three silver strings.

"When his fingers touched the strings

delightful music came from them, music sweeter than the sound of the springs or the whispers of the wind in the trees or the noise of grass shaken by the wind. The first time he began to play three sleeping tigers awakened, and so charmed were they that they did him no injury but came as near as possible to him while he was playing and afterwards withdrew. The next day still more animals came to listen, wolves, hyænas and serpents upright upon their tails.

“After a very short time the animals themselves came and asked him to play to them. It often happened that a bear came to him alone and went away satisfied with three marvellous chords. In return for his kindness the beasts gave him his food and protected him against men.

“But he wearied of this fastidious life. He became so sure of his genius and of the pleasure he gave the beasts that he no longer troubled to play well. The animals

were always satisfied as long as he played to them. Soon he even refused to give them this pleasure, and through idleness ceased to play to them at all. The whole of the forest was sad, but the morsels of food and tasty fruits did not cease to be brought to the musician's door. They continued to feed him and loved him all the more. After this fashion are the hearts of animals made.

“Now one day while he was leaning at his open door and watching the sun sink behind the motionless trees a lioness passed near him. He made a movement as if to go inside as if he expected a request which would displease him. The lioness took no notice of him and quietly passed on.

“Then he asked her in surprise : ‘Why do you not ask me to play?’ She replied that she did not care for it. He said : ‘Do you not know me?’ She replied : ‘You are Orpheus.’ He went on : ‘And you do not

desire to hear me?" She repeated: 'I do not.' 'Oh!' he cried, 'Oh! how greatly I am to be pitied! It is to you alone I always wished to play. You are much more beautiful than the others and you would understand so much better! If you will only listen to me for one hour, I will procure for you everything you have ever desired to possess.' She replied: 'I order you to steal the fresh food belonging to the men of the plains. I command you to assassinate the first one you meet. I command you to steal the victims they have offered to their Gods and lay them at my feet.' He thanked her for not demanding more and did as she required.

"For an hour he played to her; but afterwards he broke his lute and lived as if he were dead."

The Queen sighed.

"I never understand allegories. Explain it to me, beloved. What does it mean?"

He rose.

"I did not tell it for you to understand. I told you a story to calm you a little. Now it is late. Adieu, Berenice."

She began to weep.

"I was sure of it! I was sure of it!"

He laid her like a child upon her soft bed of silky stuffs; with a smile placed a kiss upon her tearful eyes then calmly descended the steps of the great litter.

THE ARTIST TRIUMPHANT

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE
TO
THE ARTIST TRIUMPHANT

PARRHASIUS, the great painter, son of Evenor of Ephesus, lived about four hundred years before Christ. He was a mighty master of his profession, and particularly excelled in strongly expressing the violent passions. He was blessed with wondrous genius and invention, and was particularly happy in his designs. He acquired great reputation by his pieces, but by none more than that in which he allegorically represented the people of Athens with all the injustice, the clemency, the fickleness, timidity, the arrogance and inconsistency which so eminently characterized that amazing nation. He once entered the lists against Zeuxis,

and when they had produced their respective pieces, the birds came to pick, with the greatest avidity, the grapes which Zeuxis had painted. Parrhasius immediately exhibited his piece, and Zeuxis said, "Remove your curtain, that we may see the painting." The curtain was the painting. Zeuxis acknowledged himself conquered by exclaiming, "Zeuxis has deceived birds, but Parrhasius has deceived Zeuxis himself." Parrhasius grew so vain of his art, that he clothed himself in purple and wore a crown of gold, calling himself the king of painters. He was lavish in his own praises, but by his vanity too often exposed himself to the ridicule of his enemies.

G. F. M.

CHAPTER I

IN the green gardens of white Ephesus we were two young learners, or apprentices, with the aged Bryaxis, the sculptor. He was sitting upon a seat made of stone as pallid as his face. He did not speak, but lightly struck the earth with the end of his staff. Out of respect for his great age and his greater glory we stood patiently before him. Our backs leaned against two dark cypress trees. We did not talk, but eagerly listened for him to speak. Motionless we studied him with homage of which he appeared to be conscious. We knew that he had survived all those whom we had longed to know. We loved him to reveal his spirit to us, for we were simple-hearted children, born too late to have heard the voices of heroes. We sought

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to trace the almost invisible bonds that united him to his striking, astonishing life-work. That brow had conceived, that hand had helped to model a frieze and twelve figures for the tomb of Mausolus, the King of Caria, whose tomb was a wonder of the world: the five Colossi erected in front of the town of Rhodes, the Bull of Pasiphæ, that made women dream strange dreams, the formidable Apollo of bronze, and the Seleucus Triumphant. The more I contemplated their author, the more it seemed to me that the Gods must have fashioned with their own hands this sculptor, in order that he might be the means of revealing them to men!

All at once a rush of feet, a whistle, and a cry of a gay heart; the young Ophelion bounded among us.

“Bryaxis,” cried he, “hear what all the city knows already. If I am the first to tell thee I will make an offering to Artemis. But first let us make our salute: I had

forgot." He now looked towards us, as if to say, "Prepare yourselves well for what I am about to tell you." Then he began thus: "You know, revered one, that Clesides painted the portrait of the Queen?"

"People have spoken about it to me."

"But the end of the story . . . has that also been told to you?"

"Is there indeed a story then to tell?"

"Is there a story? . . . You are ignorant of it all! Listen. Clesides came expressly from Athens. They took him to the Palace. The Queen was not yet ready; she permitted herself to be late. Finally she presented herself, scarcely saluting her artist, and then posed—if one could call it posing. It now seems that she continually moved, under the pretext that Love had given her a cramp. Clesides drew in a very bad humour, as you may imagine. His rough sketch was not even finished,

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and lo! the Queen wishes to pose for her back. . . .”

“Without a reason?”

“For the reason that—so she said—her back was as perfect as the rest of her body, and must appear in the picture. Clesides might well protest that he was a painter and not a sculptor, that one does not turn a picture to see its back; that one cannot draw a woman seen from every side upon the one flat plane of a picture. . . . The Queen merely responded that it was her will; that the laws of art were not her laws; that she had seen the portrait of her sister as Persephone, of her mother as Demeter; and that she, Queen Stratonice, by her sole self, wished to pose for the ‘Three Graces.’”

“That was not such a stupid idea of hers.”

Our comrade appeared to take umbrage at this remark.

“Supposing that Clesides had replied, ‘No’? He was free to do so, one would

think. It is not the custom to give orders to the artist. Such a thing as that we could *not* support. Never would her father Demetrius have done such a thing. Why, when he laid siege to Rhodes, where at the time Protogenes was at work, Demetrius refused to fire that part of the city where the sculptor worked."

"I know that story. Continue," said Bryaxis.

"Very well; I will be short with it. Clesides was very angry, but did not show it. He finished his study of the back, and the Queen rose, asking him to return on the morrow; he accepted, and left. Very good. On the morrow what awaited him? A servant, saying that the Queen Stratonice was fatigued, and would not pose any more. The servant was to pose for her until the portrait was finished. *That* was what the Queen had desired!"

We shook with mirth, and Bryaxis joined us therein.

Ophelion then continued gaily—

“The slave was not badly made. Clesides gave her the same reason to be cramped that her mistress had, and then said in a dry way that he did not want her any more, and took himself and his drawings home.”

“He certainly did right that time,” I said. “The Queen was merely mocking him all the while.”

“Well, on the way home, as he passed near the port, he saw a mariner whom some one had told him the Queen had given herself to—though there was no proof of it. The man was Glaucon—you know him well by sight. Clesides got the fellow to come home with him, and pose for four days. At the end of that time he had finished painting two scandalous little pictures, representing the Queen in the arms of the sailor, firstly facing the beholder, and then with the back showing. These pictures he fastened at night to the

wall of the Palace of Seleucus. He then doubtless fled, after this public vengeance, on some vessel, for there is said to be no trace of him. The Queen knows of it already, and if she is furious at heart she hides it marvellously.

“During the whole of the morning an enormous crowd defiled before these scandalous paintings. Stratonice was told of it, and desired to see them herself. Accompanied by twenty-five people of her court, she stopped before the two subjects, approaching and then retreating as though the better to judge of their artistic or truthful aspect in detail and in general. I was there, and as I followed her glances with a feeling of horror, wondering whom she was going to slay when her anger reached its highest point, she said : “I do not know which is the best; both are excellent!”

Bryaxis, in the midst of our exultation,

lifted merely his eyebrows, and so gave to his face the fine old lines that denoted surprise.

"She proved that she is not less witty than impudent," said he. "The whole story is very curious; but why do you seem to be so proud of or pleased with its hero? It seems to me that the part played by the model is a very important one."

"If the Queen had dared," said Ophelion, "she would have pursued Clesides even to the far-off seas, and there have had him killed as one might kill a dog. But then, through all the violet land of Greece she would have been considered none other than a barbarian woman—she who wishes to be thought a thorough Athenian. Stratonice holds Asia in her hand as though it were a fly, and she has drawn back before a man who has for weapon only a tablet and stylus. . . . Hereafter the Artist is the king of kings, the sole inviolable being living under the

sun. Now you see why it is that we are so proud!"

The elder man made a very disdainful movement of the mouth.

"Thou art young," he replied. "In my time we said the same thing, and perhaps with greater reason. When Alexander timidly tried to explain why such and such a picture seemed to be fine, my friend Apelles caused him to be silent by saying that he was making the boys laugh who ground up the colours; and Alexander made his excuses! Ah, well! I do not believe that such tales really repay one for telling them. Whatever may be the attitude—the respect or arrogance—of the King towards contemporary painters, the pictures are not any the better, or any the worse, for it all. It is a matter of indifference. On the other hand, it may be good, and even noble, for an artist to dare and to be able to put himself *not* above the King marching with an army near the walls of

his home, but above all human laws, or even divine laws, when the Muses, his inspiring spirits, sway him."

Bryaxis was now standing. We murmured in wonder—

"But who has done that? Of whom do you speak?"

"None, perhaps," came the answer of the older man, and there was in his eyes the hazy look of the dreamer, "unless the great Parrhasius. . . . Did he do wisely, I wonder? I used to believe so, but to-day I doubt and know not what to think about it."

Ophelion flung me an astonished look, but I could not enlighten him in any way as to the meaning behind the words of the aged artist.

"We do not understand you, Bryaxis," he said.

He hinted, to put us upon the right way, "The Prometheus of Parrhasius."

"Yes; what can you tell us of that?"

“Do you not know how Parrhasius painted the Prometheus of the Acropolis?”

“No. We have not been told how it was done.”

“You do not know of that amazing scene—the deathly tragedy and alarums from whence that picture emerged, blood-stained?”

“Speak. Tell us all the scene; we know nought of it.”

For an instant Bryaxis let his regards rest upon our young faces, as if he hesitated to burden our spirits with such a memory. Then he said with decision—

“Very good. I will tell you all.”

CHAPTER II

THAT which I am going to relate to you took place in the year in which Plato died. I was then in Halicarnassus engaged upon my part of the labour that was to produce at last the great tomb of King Mausolus the Long-haired. It was a thankless task if ever there was one. Scopas, who directed all of us, had decided to decorate the whole of the eastern front of the monument himself, so that from the early morning sunrise when they made the sacrifices the marbles of our master were resplendent in the full light and, truly, people saw little of the other work.

To his comrade of the chisel, Timotheus, he had given the lateral face of the monument, south; less interesting and more extended. Leochares was entrusted

with the western front. As for me, I had taken that side others had not wished for—the northern, an enormous piece of work perpetually in the shadow.

(Pithis was also employed in raising a pyramid over this stately monument and the top was adorned by a chariot harnessed to four horses. The expenses of this edifice were immense, and this gave an occasion to the philosopher Anaxagoras to exclaim when he saw it: “How much money changed into stones!”)

During five years I sculptured Victories and Amazons that looked, in the sun, like living women; but each time it became necessary for me to fix one for ever in the shadow of the monument it seemed to me that the look of life died out of the stone form, and then my tears came. At last my task came to an end. I occupied myself with preparations for returning into Attica. In that year, as to-day, the Ægean Sea was not very safe. War everywhere and strife

between one city and another. Athens besides was vanquished. The day upon which I wished to take my departure I could not find a ship-master, or owner of a privateer, who had any desire to go to the Piræus. The people of Caria, good dealers, turned towards the vanquisher, and from the time that the taking of Olynthus had let Chalcis fall into the hands of the Macedonians, all the merchants of Halicarnassus filled out their sails for Eubœa in order to sell there silken robes of Cos to the courtesans of Cnidus, where Venus was the chief deity.

I also departed for Chalcis. The voyage by sea was unpleasant to me. I was not treated well even in the little corner of the vessel that I professed to be satisfied with. My name in those days had not the same sound and fame as it has to-day and the great monument to Mausolus was too new and too near to men's minds. The other

voyagers upon the ship contented themselves with knowing that I was a citizen of Athens. That quite sufficed and they mocked, for Athens then was an unfortunate city. One morning when the sun was high we landed at Chalcis in the midst of an immense crowd in which I lost myself, and with pleasure. In questioning some one I learnt that there was outside the gates an extraordinary market. Philip, at the fall of Olynthus after having destroyed the city had led into captivity and slavery the whole of the population.

There were about forty-five thousand people. The slave-market to dispose of these had been on about two days and might last for three months. Also the city was thronged, full of strangers—purchasers and people suffering from curiosity. My interlocutor who was a dealer in wines did not complain, but he confided to me that his neighbour who sold slaves as a rule very dear was ruined. I heard the

tavern-keeper say with many gestures: "Consider, a Thracian of twenty years of age one knows what he is worth, by all the Gods. When one has bought twelve to cultivate land one counts twelve bags of gold. Now mark the price, it has fallen to fifty drachmas. Judge of the others by that only. Such a thing has never been heard of. There are three thousand virgins for sale. They will go for twenty-five drachmas apiece, and please do not think that I speak rashly on the subject. Perhaps a few drachmas more may be got for those of the whitest skins. Ah! Philip is a great king indeed!"

This man wearied me and I separated from him and followed the multitude beyond the open gates of the city to the vast stretch of country where the Olynthians were camped. With great pains I wore myself a way through the many groups in movement. Suddenly I saw pass near me a procession that was extravagant and

majestical. Before it the crowds parted to left and right.

Six Sarmatian slaves advanced in pairs, armed. Behind them a little Ethiopian held horizontally a long cross of cedar decorated with gold. It was the stick of the Master. Finally, gigantic and heavy, crowned with flowers, the beard impregnated with perfumes and clad in an enormous purple robe, I saw Parrhasius himself. He walked as though he scorned and spurned the earth beneath his feet. Each arm was around the shoulders of a beautiful girl. He was like the Indian Bacchus.

His eyes fell upon me and he said—

“If you are not Bryaxis who gave you permission to bear his face?”

“And you. If you are not the son of Semele who has given you that Dionysiac stature and that robe of purple woven by the Graces of Naxos?”

He then smiled upon me, and without lifting his arms away from their charming

supports he seized and shook my hand, pressing it against the bared breast of one of his companions.

“Chariclo,”—this to the young girl upon his right,—“take an arm of my friend and let us continue our promenade. Soon the sun will become too fierce to be pleasant.”

We therefore as he wished went on enlaced. Parrhasius walked with a grand heavy balancing of the body, measured and pompous as an hexameter, the little steps of the women were as a dactyl. In a few words he inquired of my works and my life. At each of my responses he said with vivid words, “Yes. I understand perfectly.” He wished to cut short any lengthy speech. Then he began to speak of himself.

“Clearly understand that I have taken you under my protection,” said he. “For not one citizen of Athens, save myself alone, is out of danger when near the Macedonian. If the least little trouble had brought you before their Court of Justice

I would not have given two copper coins for the value of your liberty. But now, maintain a tranquil mind."

"I am not," I responded, "of a fearsome nature, but here in the shadow of your mighty name——"

"Yes," said Parrhasius. "When Philip knew that I was going to honour his new city he sent forward upon my route an officer of the palace. This man brought me royal presents, among others the six colossal men slaves and the two beautiful girls that you have seen. That is to say Force to open my path before me and Beauty to grace my person."

"Girls of Macedonia?" I questioned.

"Macedonians of Rhodes," came the laughing answer.

And then Parrhasius with a generous gesture of gift said—

"They shall both brighten your bed this night. As for me I have others left with my valuables. But you are alone, friend. Accept these rosy flowers of flesh

from my hands. Their bright youthful skins will be strikingly beautiful contrasted with a couch of sombre purple. . . .”

We approached the great market. He stopped and regarded me.

“Indeed, you do not even ask me what it is that I come here to seek!”

“I would not dare.”

“Can you divine it?”

“No; certainly not. I do not think you can want slaves, for Philip gives you his own. Nor girls, since as you say . . .”

“I have come from Athens to Chalcis to find a model, my friend. Now you seem to be surprised.”

“A model for you. Are there not any then between the Academe and the Piræus?”

“Yes: about half a million—for me,” he said majestically. “All Athens. And yet I seek a model at the sale of the Olythians. You shall hear why, and you will comprehend.”

Here he drew himself up proudly—

. "I shall make a Prometheus."

In saying this his face expressed the horror that the subject of Prometheus would have.

"There is a Prometheus (of some sort or the other) under every portico, as you know. Timagoras made and sold one; Apollodorus has attempted another. Zeuxis has believed that he has the power to . . . but why bring back to our memory so much piteous painting. *The Prometheus* has never yet been given to the world."

"That I fully believe," I replied to the Master.

"They have represented peasants naked and attached to rocks made of wood. Their faces were distorted by a grimace of some sort, a mere face-ache. But, Prometheus the forger of fire, and creator of the man and his struggle with the eagle-god. . . . Ah! No one has yet created that, Bryaxis. Such a Prometheus, one of the greatest grandeur, I see as plainly

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before me, created by my brain, as I see your face. That is the type of Prometheus that I wish to nail to the walls of the Parthenon.”

Saying that he quitted the support of his girl companion, took his wand of wood and gold, and traced great waves of outline in the air.

“For two months I have worked upon my great scheme. I have found splendid rocks in the domain of Crates, at the Promontory of Astypolus. All these studies were finished, the foundation of my picture ready, the line of the figure in its place. All at once I find my way barred before me. I fail to find a head. If it was merely a question of a Hermes, an Apollo or Pan, all the citizens of Athens would be proud to pose before me. But to take for model a man whose face is shining with genius and to tie, or bind, him by the ankles, the hands, no, you can see that is not possible. One cannot dislocate his limbs like the limbs of a slave. We lack slaves who have

the heads of freeborn Greeks. Ah, well, Philip brings us some like that, and I come to buy where Philip comes to sell."

I shuddered

"An Olynthian. One of the vanquished. But where do you intend to finish this picture?"

"At Athens."

"Upon the soil of Athens your slave will be free."

"He will be—when I wish it, and not before."

"But then, if you treat your captive so, have you no fear whatever of what the laws will say?"

"The laws?" questioned Parrhasius with a smile. "The laws are in the hollow of my hand, even as are the folds of this mantle that I now throw over my shoulder, behind me!"

And with a magnificent movement he seemed at the same time to enwrap himself with purple and with the sun.

CHAPTER III

THE market for the sale of the Olynthians now stretched before us. As far as one could see, and forming in a straight line six large parallel ways, platforms of planks were erected upon tressels at a height of about a yard from the ground. The population of an entire city was there exposed before the population of another city: the one as merchandise, the other as purchaser. Twenty-five thousand men, women and children, their hands bound behind the back, the ankles shackled with loose cords, waited, for the most part standing—waited the unknown master who was yet to come, purchase, and lead them to some, to them, unknown place on Grecian soil. One soldier guarded forty; servants in crowds circulated with the

bread and water needed for the sustenance of such a host of slaves. A great and murmurous noise perpetually ascended to the sky. It was like the sound of a great feast.

Parrhasius penetrated into the principal "street" of slaves, where were exposed for sale young men and young girls who appeared for one reason or another to be of the sort that would command a high price. To my great astonishment I did not catch in their eyes any great expression of sadness. They seemed merely curious. Human sadness and misery, for youth that is, has its certain measure, and they saw their sorrows were about to pass or be moderated by the care of a master. From the time of the ruin of their homes these beautiful beings had experienced to the full all that could give days and nights of despair. The young men no doubt had regained hope of their future escape: the young girls perhaps dreamed of a love that

might partly release them. By bravado or by sheer ignorance of the fate in store they all showed a certain good humour. The crowd pressed around them, examining and uncertain before making a purchase. Few could have decided quickly in the midst of such a vast choice. Often they handled the slaves. Hands tested the muscles of a leg, the delicacy of a skin, the firmness of a breast. Then the intending purchasers passed on hoping to find better bargains.

Parrhasius halted an instant before a girl whose tall white form was a harmony of lines.

“Behold,” he said, “this is a beautiful child.”

A seller at once came forward and cried—

“She is the most beautiful one offered for sale, my lord. See how straight she is and white. Sixteen years old yesterday.”

. "Eighteen years," rectified the young girl.

"You lie, by Zeus! She is but sixteen years, my lord; do not credit her when she says otherwise. Look at her black locks lifted up by this comb. When she uncoils her hair it falls to the knees. Look at her long white fingers, untouched by any labour. She is the daughter of a senator."

"Speak not of my father," said the girl gravely.

"She is beautiful as a water-nymph, supple as a sword, and a virgin—as at her birth."

The man disrobed her with cynical hands, but Parrhasius struck the earth with his stick, and muttered—

"Virgin, you say? I care not whether she be a virgin or not, but merely whether she be beautiful enough. Take away her shackles, that she may robe herself properly. I will purchase her. What is her name?"

"Artemidora," said she.

"Ah, good. Then know, Artemidora, that you are for the future in the suite of Parrhasius."

She opened her great eyes wide, hesitated charmingly, and then said—

"You are the Parrhasius who . . ."

"Yes, I am Parrhasius," came the reply.

Then, handing her to the care of his guard, he again walked on. Presently he deigned to explain to me—

"Bound to the Caucausus that young girl would look charming! Nevertheless, she will not be my Prometheus. She will serve me as model for certain little erotic pictures with which I ease my toils during hours of leisure—pictures that are not, however, the least noble part of my life-work."

We walked on. The crowd had greatly increased. The sun became more terrible in the midst of that vast plain, without a

shadow, and in the midst of a great and mixed concourse of people.

Artemidora was dressed in a white tunic, girdle, and veil. She often turned to look at us, and it seemed to me that when properly robed she seemed to be another person. Her face acquired another expression, and she seemed anxious to glean from one of us which was to be the man she was fated to surrender to. Already we had been through half the principal street when Parrhasius stopped, and said—

“No. That for which I seek is not here. The youth of the body and the beauty of the face are not found together. I have more chance, I think, of finding my man among slaves of the second class.”

Scarcely had we gone three more paces when he extended his hand, and cried out, “Behold him!”

I drew near and gazed with curiosity. The man, whom he pointed to was about fifty years of age. Of a fine, tall figure and

excellent proportions, he had a large face; the arch of the brows was powerful and muscular, the nose and ears were correctly modelled, hair grey, but beard brown and brindled. The strong muscles of the neck formed a sort of pedestal to his fine head, and gave it a pose of authority.

Parrhasius questioned him. "What do you call yourself?"

"Outis."

"I do not ask you for anything, my brave man, but the name that you received from your father."

"For a month past I have called myself Outis. If I have ever borne another, older name it does not please me to tell you."

"Why not?"

"It does not please me to tell you why, Son of a Dog."

Parrhasius became maddened with anger. The seller of the slaves, alarmed, advanced with suppliant arms.

"Do not listen to him, my lord. He

speaks as one who has lost his senses. It is pure malice on his part, for he has more brain-power than I have. He is a physician. For science and cleverness he had not his equal in all Olynthus. I say what all the world would repeat, for he was celebrated even in Macedon. People have told me that during thirty years he has cured more Olynthians than we were able to kill when we took their city. This will be a precious slave when he is chained and has felt the rod. He plays the insolent, but he will change his tone, as all the others will or have done. Then, if you lead him away with you, Death will not come to you till your hundredth winter! Give me thirty drachmas, and this Nicostratus will be your thing for ever."

"Nicostratus," repeated Parrhasius to me; "as a poet I know one of that name. My indifference is total towards the science of medicine."

Turning towards the seller he ordered—

“ Remove his clothes.”

Nicostratus let this be done, powerless and yet disdainful. Parrhasius continued to command that the captive take up first one position and then another. At last the bargain was struck. Parrhasius then said, “ Superb !”

But I did not reply, for I felt almost envious.

Fifty years have passed—the space of a human life. I have seen hundreds and hundreds of models, but never one worthy to be compared with that Nicostratus the Olynthian. He was the Statue of the Man in all his grandeur at the full age of force and power. I never had him as a model for anything of mine; the unfortunate being only posed once, and you shall learn how.

CHAPTER IV

I RETURNED upon horseback to my own place going through Attica. During my five years of absence creditors had sold the few poor goods I possessed, and I put up very simply at a hostelry of Athens for many weeks. Parrhasius followed after an interval of a few days. Hearing of my modest lodging, he at once offered me hospitality. I went to him at once to thank him and decline. He then lived near the Academy, in a palace of marble and metal, near to the little house that Plato lived in.

The gardens extended to the river, and the house was surrounded by much pomp of trees.

By some feebleness of the intellect that is difficult to understand in a man of such strength and value, Parrhasius positively adored ostentation and every show of

wealth. His fortune was immense, and he did not permit any one to think otherwise. With marble, silk, gold, and beauteous women, his abode had the air of a palace of Artaxerxes. He greeted me upon the threshold of the chamber that served him for a studio. Standing robed in red silk and crowned like an Olympian god, he opened his large arms to me. I then penetrated by his side into the famous salon that had been the matrix of so many masterpieces.

"My Prometheus?" he said, in answer to my question. "No; I am yet meditating upon that. In a few days I shall see it all clearer. Come; look at this little thing. It is wonderful. I have never done a more beautiful thing."

It was a picture of a sleeping nymph and two satyrs. I saw, near, the lovely Artemidora and two of the Sarmatians, and at once divined that they had posed for the picture.

He ordered the pose to be again taken, and continued the painting before me.

CHAPTER V

I REMAINED an entire month at Athens, occupied with my own personal affairs; and these did not allow me time to return to the house of the great painter. Athens was truly in mourning since the fall of the Olynthians. The slave-market at Chalcis, the sale of a people, such a scandal and insult was the subject on all tongues, and the dream of all those who were silent.

One day it was known that in Athens a citizen held captive an Olynthian woman. The citizen was condemned and executed.

Alarmed, I hastened to Parrhasius, and my entreaties gained me admission to him. . . . Never shall I forget the regard, slow and grave, with which Parrhasius greeted me when I entered. He was standing, painting. Then, following his further

glances, I saw, nude and bound to an actual rock, Nicostratus the Olynthian.

"Cry out!" shouted Parrhasius to him; and his awesome captive did, cursing, foaming, and raging.

The face of Parrhasius did not alter one line. He said to a Sarmatian slave: "Upon his right; touch lightly, without penetrating." Nicostratus saw the man advance, and soon his eyes swooned and a sweat of agony came to his temples. Moans came to the lips; then a sob, like that of a child. Parrhasius, impassible, studied the face; then suddenly cried out: "The imbecile! He has died too soon."

* * * * *

When it was known how Parrhasius had painted his Prometheus the people stormed his house, crying out for death to the murderer. At last Parrhasius appeared in all his pomp and faced the crowd and all its cries. Then, slowly lifting his painting, as though offering something sacrosanct,

he showed the Athenian people the Prometheus.

An awesome shudder of amazement, of wonderment at its highest, came to the populace who saw the great picture—the picture of human anguish and final defeat by death. The summit, the uttermost, of tragic grandeur seemed to be unveiled there for the first time. . . . Silence, as of a temple, held the people for a time; then some hostile cries broke out afresh. But they were futile, and died, lost in the splendid thunder of glory.

THE HILL OF HORSEL

IN the month of August eighteen ninety-one, shortly after I had heard, at Bayreuth, *Tannhäuser*, *Tristan* and *Parsifal*, for the ninth time, I spent a fortnight in the verdant Marienthal near the ancient city of Essenach.

The room I occupied looked out on the west upon the lofty Wartburg, and on the east upon Mount Horsel, that peak which used to be called by priests and poets the Venusberg. The star of Wolfram appeared in the bright sky of this land of Wagner.

I was then so prone to sun that after leaning my elbows once upon the sill of the western window before Luther's towers I determined never to return there even in my dreams. The Venusberg attracted me to it.

Alone, among all the neighbouring peaks which with their coverings of black

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firs or fertile meadows formed a garment for the earth, the Venusberg was bare and like a woman's swelling breast. Sometimes the rosy dawn cast purple flesh-like tints upon it. It palpitated; truly at certain hours of the evening it seemed to live, and then it appeared as if Thuringia, like a divinity reclining in a green and black tunic, allowed the blood of her desires to mount to the summit of her bare breast.

Throughout the long evenings of each day I watched the transfiguration of the hill of Venus. I gazed at it from afar. I did not approach it. It pleased me not to believe in its natural existence, for exquisite is the pleasure of simplifying realities into the pure aspect of their symbols, and remaining at such a distance that the eye is not forced to see things as they are. I was afraid that once for all the illusion would vanish never to return on the day when I set my foot upon the mountain itself.

. Yet one morning I started. At first I followed the Gotha Road, which is intersected by bridges and streams overgrown with verdure; then a path through the fields. I had not lifted my eyes from the meadows when three hours later I reached the end of it. Then I looked before me.

Seen from near at hand, Mount Horsel was bare and reddish, without earth, verdure, or water upon it; it appeared to be burned up by an internal fire as if the legendary curse continued to arrest at its base all the fresh vegetation which gave life to the other mountains. The path I followed was made of stones and dead lichen, and was sometimes quite indistinct amid a stony desert, while at other times it was narrowly enclosed between high and rusty rocks. It ascended to the summit, where a little grey house had been built with thick walls to stand against the violence of the wind.

I entered the house and discovered that I could lunch there. Lunch upon the

Venusberg! That would be the last step to my disenchantment. I accepted the idea, to my shame, willingly enough, for in spite of everything I was hungry.

The two daughters of the inn-keeper, who was absent, served me upon a little table a Wiener Schnitzl, which was perhaps more Saxon than Austrian, and a bottle of Niersteiner. This was reality indeed. The clean, light dining-room, the white curtains at the windows, the freshly-cleaned floor, a light bedroom visible through an open door, all succeeded in convincing me that I was not lunching with magicians, as for a moment, alas! I had hoped. The two young girls were two good spirits who would take no part in the damnation of the country.

It is true that at the conclusion of the meal the elder discreetly retired and the younger one gave me a smile of invitation which proved her natural goodness; but at German inns the servants hardly fix any

precise limits to the kindness they bestow upon young travellers, and that fact does not generally mean that they have made a compact with a goddess of darkness.

We talked. She was obliging enough to understand my German, though I spoke it something like a negro from the Cameroons. I asked her for some topographical information of the country. She gave it to me with a very good grace.

"Don't forget," she said, "to visit the grotto."

"What grotto?"

"The Venusshoehle."

"Is there a grotto of Venus?"

"Yes! that is its name; I don't know why; you must not go down the mountain without seeing it."

Uneasy and almost jealous, I wanted to know whether many strangers came to see this grotto, whose name alone had made me quiver.

The young girl sadly replied—

"No one! You see the mountain is not lofty enough to tempt climbers, and it is too high for walkers. Occasionally at very distant intervals a sportsman from Essenach comes to lunch or to spend the night here; but you are the first Frenchman I have seen since my birth."

"Which is the way to the grotto?"

"Take the path to the left. You will get there in five minutes. Perhaps you will find at the entrance a man seated upon a stone. Pay no attention to what he says: he is mad."

So there was a grotto of Venus in the flanks of the Horselberg! But then the country of Tannhäuser had retained the whole of its terrible legend.

The grotto of the Goddess was really there. And the man was there too.

It was small, elliptical at the top, crowned with fine dark briars, and appeared as the necessary symbol of the mountain, as another justification of the

old German tale still more striking than the carnal aspect of the Venusberg on the horizon. The interior, into which I gazed, was dark, narrow and low. Pools of water and dark recesses made up its dark floor. It was difficult to enter without becoming mud-stained, but some incomprehensible charm attracted me into the humid darkness.

"Where are you going?" the man said shortly.

"To the bottom of the grotto."

"To the bottom of the grotto? But there is no bottom to it, sir. It is the mouth of the earth."

"Good," I said patiently. "I will not go far. I shall soon return."

His hollow cheeks grew purple. He hit his stick with his fist.

"Ah! you will soon be back! Ha! ha! you think you can go in and out of there at will. Do you think this grotto is a lift or a geological curiosity? Are you a

Cook's tourist, or do you come from a natural history museum? Have you come to write your name upon the rock, or to gather stones for your collection? You think you are about to discover here subterranean lakes, blind fish, architectural stalactites and rocky arches covered with crystals! You are going to study the geology of the Venusshoehle. Ha! ha! that is admirable! Are you, too, a madman like the others? You, also, do not understand. You then are not aware that Venus is there in the flesh with millions of her nymphs around her and they are more living than you are, since they are immortal."

"Sir," I said, "I believe what you tell me; but you very much misjudge me if you think that the presence of Venus will prevent me from entering here."

"Hell!" he cried.

"I should not be displeased to earn it as the price of her favours."

The madman made a gesture which

evidently meant : " You do not understand me at all." Then he put his hands to his forehead and began to speak.

" Horselberg ! or rather Hoelenberg, the Mountain of Hell ! they come to thee without being warned of thy eternal horrors, thou who waitest for the pure, punishest the chaste, and will consume in eternity the wicked misers of the flesh. They will have lived their lonely lives as rebels to the great law divine, and they will not know thy atrocious burning till the day when, by the power of the Sword, the Harbinger of Souls will plunge them into the abyss. They have eyes and they see not, ears have they and they hear not, they have mouths and they do not. . . . My God, they are mad ! mad ! mad !"

Suddenly turning to me he shouted—

" How can you think that the Venusberg can become a place of damnation when it is hell itself."

I made a movement.

"Alas! he groaned. "Alas! My God!" (his hands fell from his eyes to his beard) "Alas! shall I be the only living person to know the truth, the truth, the truth. Will it be all in vain that the patriarchs have placed Venus as the terrible antithesis of God, and will no one understand that she is Satan? Is it all in vain that ancient tradition has painted the satyrs with horns, black tail, goat's legs and cloven hoofs: will no one realize that they are demons? With regard to the flames of hell, will no one in the world understand that they are thousands of naked women dancing . . ." (he struck the earth) "there beneath our feet!"

He shuddered.

"Ever since man has thought, written and learned, he has said, repeated and cried out that there is no worse torture than love. How is it he has not foreseen that in the world of eternal torture that punish-

ment alone will be inflicted upon him! What other could he imagine more terrible than it?"

He then assumed a position as if he were gazing into the distance and waved his hand.

"Yes," he said, "it is there . . . it is there. . . . On the day when we shall be nothing but rotting corpses and souls maddened by terror, there we shall go in crowds, all of us, all sinners, to burn in that horrible fire which is Lust. Every day and every hour we shall experience desire, even to the extent of suffering, for more and more beautiful women, and at the moment of possession we shall see them, as on earth, vanish in smoke. But that which is here a spasm, a fear, a cry, a sob,—which suffices to prepare the curse of a human life—will be there a perpetual tremor, uninterrupted anguish, and the punishment of years, of centuries and of centuries. • Ah! God! such is the destiny which awaits me."

His eyes became fixed upon a stone on the ground. Nodding his head he went on in a strangely changed voice—

“I have lived an evil life, sir; this is the reason. I was born of Protestant parents in the Mountain of Wartburg, that same one where Luther, more than three centuries ago, taught his evil doctrine. I spent my youth in piety, and led a noble and austere life. But from my fourteenth year I could not look at a woman without being assailed by terrible desire. I curbed it, after fierce struggles which left me in the morning with a forehead bathed in sweat and trembling face. I thought I could remain pure by living without love, mad that I was, and blind to my own interests. To remain pure I would have killed myself with my own hand before committing any sin. Those who have not experienced nightly combats between religious duty and the frantic desires of the body have not known sorrow. I struggled thus for a

shadow, and now I know that I struggled against God. And later I got married, sir, but married only in the eyes of the world. The woman and I had sworn only to unite our souls. That was how, little by little, I was damned for my fault of lying every day to the law of life; and afterwards there was not time for me to follow the path I had missed in my youth. Ah! cursed be virgins! for the love they have repulsed during their brief existence will justly be their punishment in their future state."

He seized me by the arm.

"Listen! The sun is sinking. Now is the time. Every evening I come here, and sweetly the Goddess sings. She calls me from afar; she attracts me. I come just as at the day of my death, at the day of my fall into the Venusshoehle. Ah! do not say a word. She is about to speak to us."

I do not know whether it was these last few words, the man's expression, or the grasp of his hand which persuaded me that

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he was speaking truly—but tremors ran through me and I listened.

I expected, not as an accident, but with the absolute exactness of prevision, the event predicted by the madman.

I can only compare my state of mind to that of a traveller who, after seeing the lightning, and knowing how far the storm is, waits for the thunder.

The time which separated me from the prodigy decreased first by a quarter, then a half, then three-quarters, and at the precise moment which I had anticipated as the end of my waiting, *a breath of perfumes carried up to us the languishing echo of a . . . Voice!*

Here ends the Book of Seven Stories by
Pierre Louÿs.

Explicit Laus Veneris.

